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FOOTHOLDS FOR FAITH'S FEET

IN SONG AND STORY.

ILLUSTRATIVE LECTURES.

BY

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Late of Knox Church, St. Thomas, Ont.

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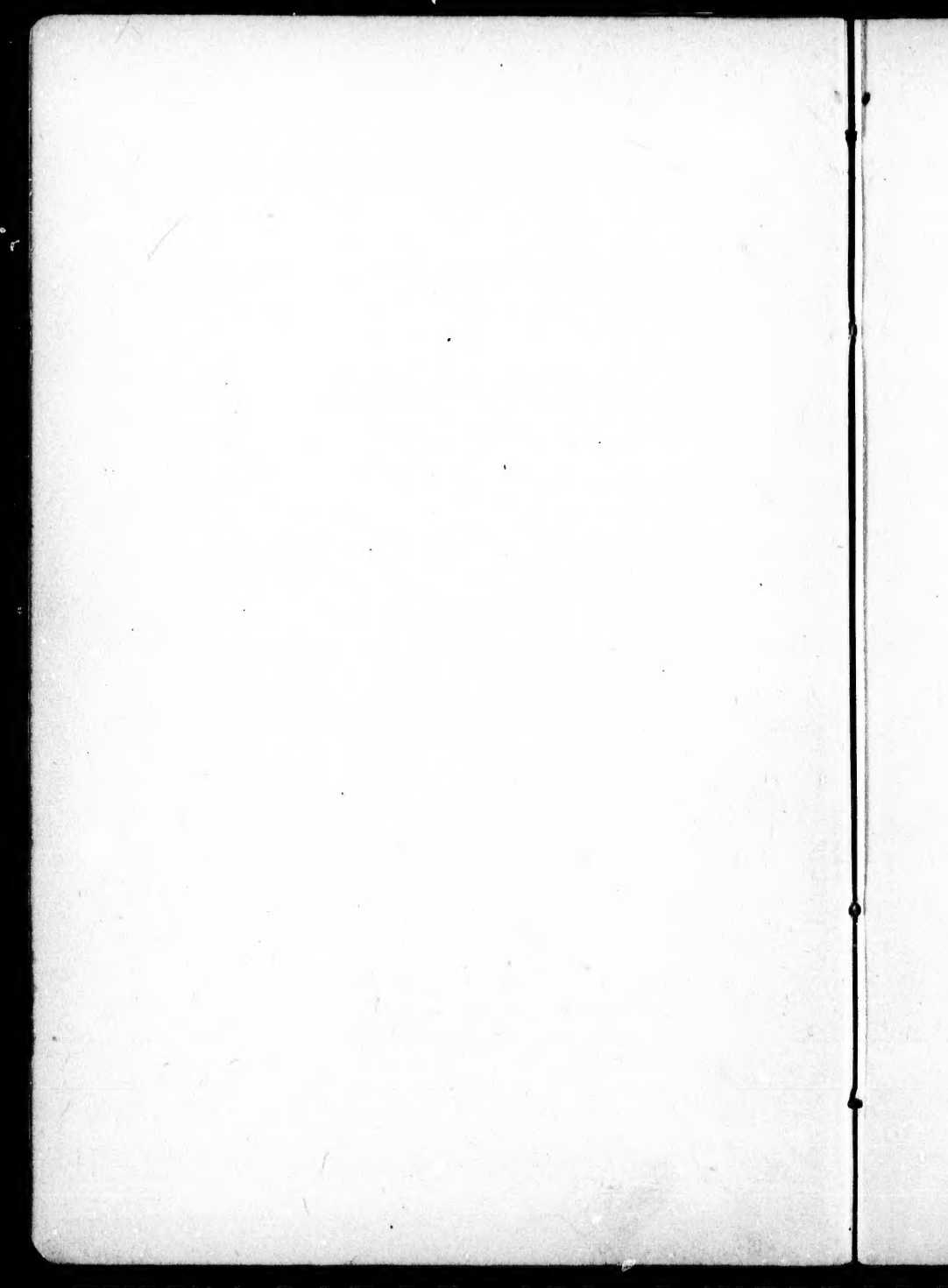
ENTERED, according to Act of the Parliament of Canada, in the year one thousand eight hundred and ninety-one, by WILLIAM BRIGGS, Book Steward of the Methodist Book and Publishing House, Toronto, at the Department of Agriculture.

To

THE KIND AND CHRISTIAN PEOPLE OF THE
TWO CONGREGATIONS,
DUMFRIES STREET CHURCH, PARIS,
AND
KNOX CHURCH, ST. THOMAS;
TO WHOM IT WAS MY GREAT PRIVILEGE TO MINISTER IN
SPIRITUAL THINGS FOR
FOUR AND TWO YEARS RESPECTIVELY,
THIS LITTLE BOOK IS AFFECTIONATELY
DEDICATED.
YOURS IN THE LOVE OF THE LORD JESUS,

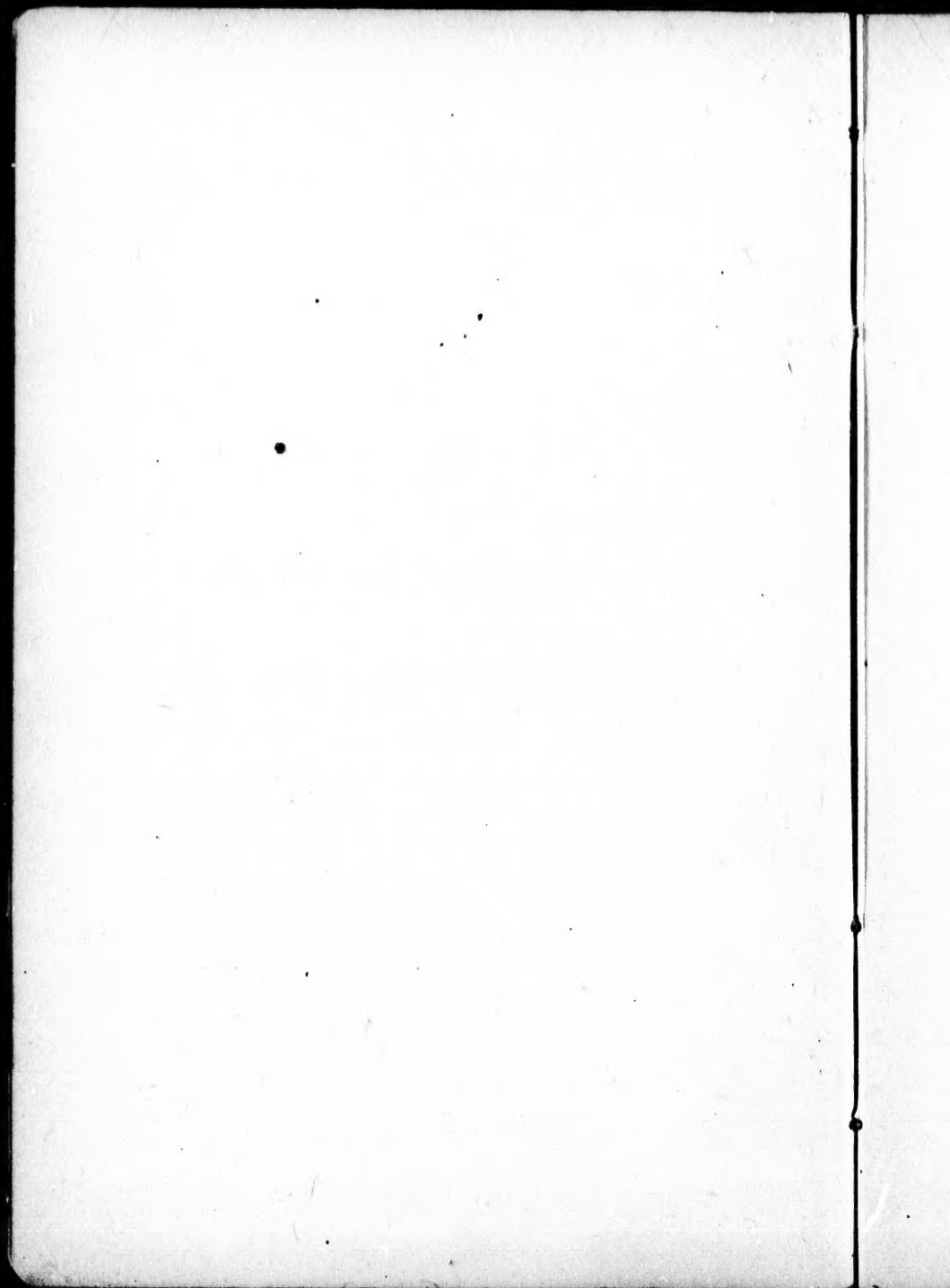
W. H. W. BOYLE.

COLORADO SPRINGS, U.S.,
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INTRODUCTION.

THE following illustrative lectures were delivered in a Sabbath evening course, under the name of "Hymns and Hymn-writers." The object sought in the preparation of such a course was two-fold : First, to have my people become better acquainted with the subjects, the suggesting incidents and doctrines of the most popular hymns, in order to give an intelligent rendering of them in the service of praise ; "Sing ye praises with the understanding." Psalm 47 : 7. Second, in giving a succinct history of the authors of those hymns, to present before the minds, especially of young Christians, fit models for their study and imitation in the lives of men who were bright reflections of the character of Jesus ; just as the ancient Romans were wont to place busts of celebrated men in the vestibules of their homes, that so their children, learning the history of their lives, might be led to emulate their virtues.

The first five lectures of the course were delivered in Paris and St. Thomas. They were received in both places with evident favor, and to my knowledge were instrumental, under the blessing of God, in the awakening, quickening and comforting of souls,

INTRODUCTION.

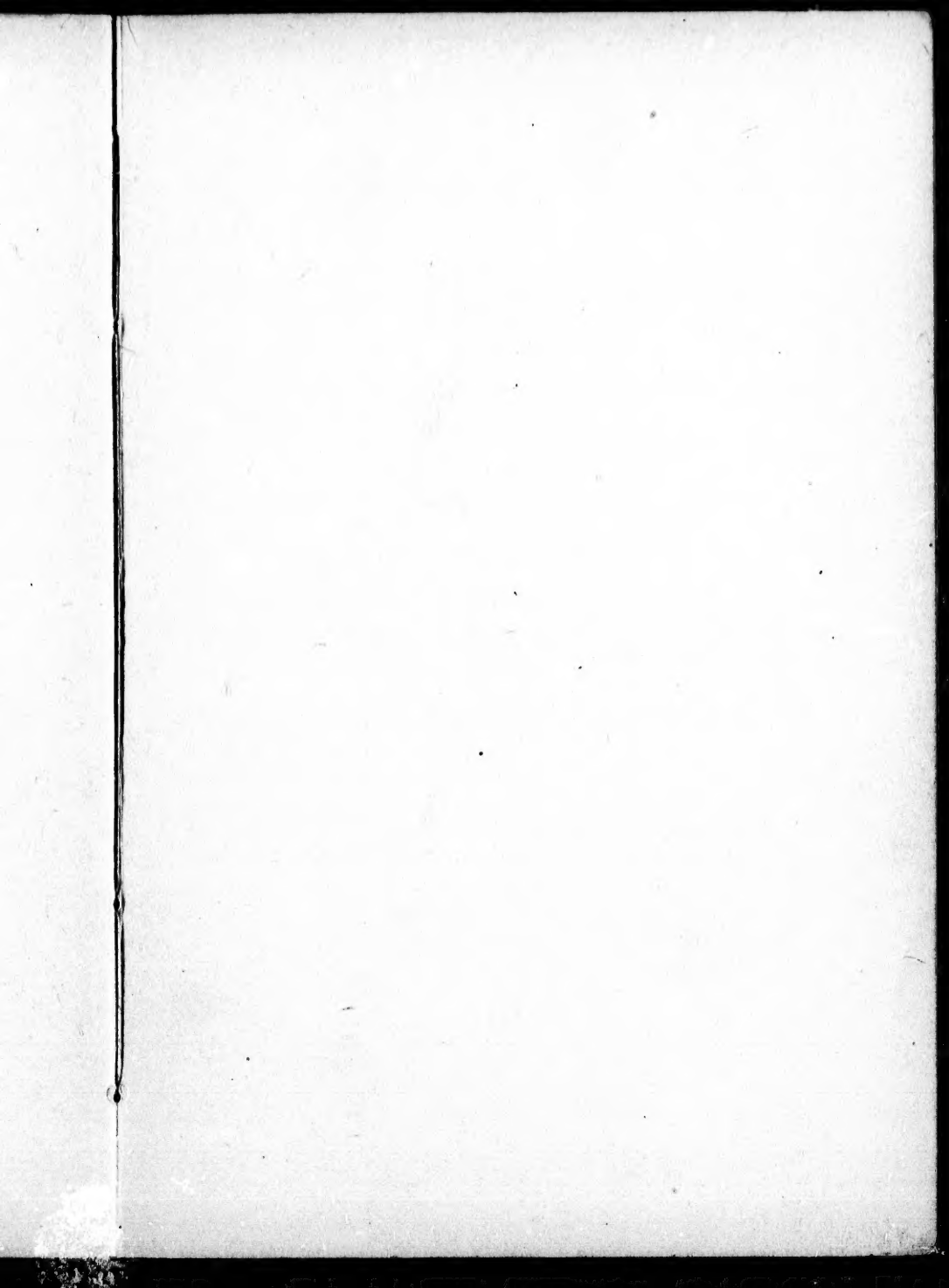
They were by no means intended for publication at the time they were written; but circumstances having completely changed, the putting of these six lectures into book form may be deemed justifiable. Being forced to relinquish the work which had grown increasingly interesting to me, and having lost the use of my voice for public service by continued ill-health, I may in this way still be able to continue my work of ministry. I trust my feeble efforts may be worthy of some degree of acceptance, and that some sentences from these pages may be owned and blessed of God to the salvation and strengthening of precious souls.

I must acknowledge my indebtedness to several writers for facts relating to the lives of the Hymn-writers and incidents associated with the history of the hymns, but chiefly to the author of "English Hymns." The first lecture of the course was delivered, as it now appears, in St. Thomas, on the Centenary of the death of Charles Wesley; the sixth was the last discourse delivered by me, on the evening of June 22nd, 1890, a few days before my sudden prostration.

With an earnest desire to be still used by Him, "whose I am, and whom I serve."

Yours in Christ,

W. H. W. B.



*Jesus, Lover of my soul,
Let me to Thy bosom fly,
While the nearer waters roll,
While the tempest still is high.*

*Hide me, O my Saviour, hide,
Till the storm of life is past;
Safe into the haven guide;
O receive my soul at last!*

*Other refuge have I none;
Hangs my helpless soul on Thee;
Leave, ah! leave me not alone;
Still support and comfort me.*

*All my trust on Thee is stayed,
All my help from Thee I bring;
Cover my defenceless head
With the shadow of Thy wing.*

*Thou, O Christ, art all I want;
More than all in Thee I find:
Raise the fallen, cheer the faint,
Heal the sick, and lead the blind.*

*Just and holy is Thy name;
I am all unrighteousness;
False and full of sin I am:
Thou art full of truth and grace.*

*Plenteous grace with Thee is found,
Grace to cover all my sin;
Let the healing streams abound;
Make and keep me pure within.*

*Thou of life the fountain art,
Freely let me take of Thee;
Spring Thou up within my heart,
Rise to all eternity.*

THE SOUL'S SURE REFUGE.

“And a man shall be as an hiding-place from the wind,
and a covert from the tempest.”—ISAIAH xxxii. 2.

“Jesus, Lover of my soul,
Let me to Thy bosom fly.”

HYMNODOLOGY is said to be the truest theology, because it is the expression of the heart that has met with God. In philosophical treatises on questions pertaining to theology, such as: the existence and character of God, or, the nature and immortality of the soul, the whole is apt to resolve itself into a form of argument or definition, with the strength of appeal to the reason and intellect, rather than to the affections and heart. But in order to the assurance of a genuine religion, both must be secured. While the mind is enlightened and convinced by truth, the heart must be touched, enlarged, and chastened by love.

Hymnology effects this. It deals not so much with principles, as with principles transformed

by practice. It is Scripture re-spoken in the language of the adoring worshipper. It is the skeleton of doctrine breathed upon by the Spirit of God, and made to throb in the being and beauty of a living thing.

Let Miriam, the prophetess, but stand safe upon the shores of "Egypt's dark sea," with timbrel and dulcimer in hand, to lead Israel's daughters in songs of deliverance, and she will awaken the melody of abounding gratitude to God in the hearts of the emancipated people.

Let the princely David but touch his harp to make music fit for his wonderful heart-songs, and all the people will say amen. He will play the enchanter's part over the dark heart of Saul the king, and beguile his moments into forgetfulness of evil. He will light up the fire on the altar of Israel's devotions, and send down the music of his prayers to be re-prayed in the believing life of every age.

Let the captive people who sit by the streams of Babel, but lift their harps from the willows, and as the breath of springtime gives the promise of nature's resurrection, so a chord will thrill through their aching, home-sick hearts, and turn them back to the God of Zion with affection and hope.

Let the attendant angels come down with the

sonnets of Paradise, to proclaim over Bethlehem's plains the glory of the incarnate deity—the Child of Mary and the manger, and those morning-songs of salvation shall roll down through the ages, until the loud amen of earth's great song of Christ-redemption shall lift up and blend with the hallelujahs of Heaven.

Let dear old Simeon but hold in his embrace the "Consolation of Israel," then his soul will "depart in peace," for he has seen the hope of Israel's salvation; but the sympathetic quaver of his grand *benedictus* still thrills within our hearts, when nineteen centuries have passed away.

Let Paul and Silas but forget their sufferings in the prison-stocks of Philippi, as they think of Him who "endured the cross" on Calvary, and the lonely dungeon will at once be transformed into a sanctuary, jubilant with redeeming praises.

Yes, the throbbing pulse of this blessed book before me, is the pulse of praise from beginning to end, from the shout of the "sons of God" at the daydawn of creation, until the beatific visions of Patmos were ushered in with ascriptions of praise, "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood."

The very heart of devotion here, for praise is

ever mixed with prayer ; the heart of devotion hereafter, for all will praise—the angel-ladder between earth and heaven, upon which worship ascends from man to God, and upon which blessing returns from God to man. Everything sings. This great, wide universe is rich in rhapsodies of praise, if our faculties were but quick enough to catch up the strain.

“ In reason's ear they all rejoice,
And utter forth a glorious voice ;
Forever singing as they shine,
The hand that made us is Divine.”

When our hearts well forth in the songs of to-night, we are only keeping time with the baton-beat of God ; and if immortal man would not praise Him, whom the angels delight to worship, the very stones would cry out.

No book of sacred song would be considered perfect without the hymn of this evening's study :—

“ Jesus, Lover of my soul,
Let me to Thy bosom fly.”

Charles Wesley, the author of this wonderful hymn, was born at Epworth, in Lincolnshire, England, in the year 1708. His father was a minister once, of the Episcopalian order, but later in life, having adopted certain views of the

Nonconformists, he forfeited his living, and sooner than do violence to his conscientious convictions, he wrought, like Paul, with his own hands for his earthly bread, while he earnestly sought to break the bread of eternal life unto others.

Charles was the youngest child of the family, and early in life gave unmistakable evidence of remarkable cleverness and originality. While still a youth, a wealthy namesake in Ireland proposed to adopt him as his son, and make him heir of all he possessed, but Charles declined. The person who was chosen in his stead became an Earl, and was also the grandfather of the famous Duke of Wellington; while this poor lad, the seventeenth child of a debt-oppressed parsonage, was spared for a better life, and a career of wider usefulness. "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose."

Charles was educated for the ministry in Oxford and Westminster. In the former place, he and his brother John, and a few class-mates who joined them, were nick-named "Methodists," from the fact that they did not conform to customary and established usages in conducting their services. They believed that in all devo-

tion, spirit without form is better than form without spirit. They practised what they believed, and according to promise, the Spirit gave life. The blessing came, and one of the grandest miracles of modern Christianity is "Methodism."

After his ordination he accompanied his brother John as a missionary to a colony in Georgia, but soon afterwards returned to England. It was about this time, according to his own testimony, that he received the "witness of spiritual adoption," while listening to the sincere experience of a poor mechanic, whom he declares, "knew nothing but Jesus." At once he joined his brother in the great evangelistic work upon which he had entered, and preached, in the face of bitter opposition and persecution, with whole-souled fervor and earnestness, the simple and yet sublime story of a great salvation.

But whatever his other gifts and graces may have been, it is as the most gifted and voluminous of English hymn-writers that his fame and influence still live. His facility for the expression of spiritual ideas was truly wonderful, and the range of his thought was very wide. Within four years, from 1768 until 1772, he placed before the Methodist Episcopal Conference, thirteen volumes of sacred poetry, containing altogether 6,000 pages, and from that time

until the close of his life, new productions were continually appearing. He wrote everywhere; in the stage coach while travelling; on horseback, and even in the hour of death, when no longer able to articulate distinctly, he composed a hymn. He sang the doctrines of his creed into the hearts of believers, and thus he was able to make, in the words of his gifted and sainted brother, "all the world his parish."

This love of music and poetry was born with the Wesleys. Their father before them had gained considerable notoriety as the author of a volume of hymns, the best known of which is entitled, "Behold, the Saviour of Mankind." Their mother was a woman of remarkable piety and strength of character. The following is related in the writings of John concerning her death: "As we stood together by her bedside, with the awful realization that we were losing a mother, she calmly said, 'Children, as soon as your mother is released, sing a psalm of praise;' and with broken accents we fulfilled her request in the words of a hymn which Charles had written for this very use."

Nearly every condition and experience of spiritual life is provided for in the productions of his pen, and these he celebrated with a richness of diction and a splendor of coloring, which

have rarely if ever been surpassed. Some one writes of him : " As might be expected his finer pieces are sometimes found in too high a key of ecstasy or agony ; yet his intensely sincere and earnest spirit, his intellectual strength and acuteness, his unmistakably high culture, and matchless spontaneity of his eloquence, place him easily at the head of British sacred lyrists."

Upon a tablet in Westminster Abbey three names are associated : Isaac Watts, John Wesley and his brother Charles, and beneath them is written the threefold inscription, which fitly represents the sentiments of the lives it commemorates : " The best of all is God is with us." " I look upon all this world as my parish." " God buries His workmen, but carries on His work."

Charles Wesley was one evening sitting by his opened window, which overlooked the sea on the south-west coast of England. A tremendous storm was raging on the ocean. The billows were running mountains high and hurling their strength upon the shore. The elements above, as the lightning flashed and thunder pealed, combined with the elements below to complete a picture of wrathful nature. The spiritual perception of Wesley was wide awake. He heard God's voice in the thunder ; in the storm he beheld His omnipotence ; the lightning betokened

the gleam of righteous judgment; and in the surging waves, as they wearily sighed to the shore, he heard the groaning of a creation that waited for deliverance, and the solo of a weary soul, tired of earthly dissatisfaction and seeking for rest. He was about to close his window and retire, when a little bird, driven by the in-blowing tempest, flew through the window and nestled affrighted on his bosom. Meditation had already quickened the energies of his spirit, and the suggestion was enough. The touching incident presented to his ready mind some beautiful imagery, and grasping his pen, with an inspiration which seemed borrowed from the very minstrelsy of heaven, he wrote these matchless lines, which "have yielded the marching song for millions on their way to glory": ✓

"Jesus, Lover of my soul,
Let me to Thy bosom fly."

This at first view is the language of a heart that is broken; the outcry of a soul that is struggling for life; the note of a half-despair which melts away into symphonies of hope. It is the language of a soul who realizes the misery of sin and is seeking for salvation from it; who

has realized the utter helplessness of self and the need of a Saviour.

" Other refuge have I none,
Hangs my helpless soul on Thee."

It is Lot arising from wrath-doomed Sodom and reaching Zoar. It is the first-born of Israel with blood upon the lintels and door-posts, as the angel of death went by. It is the opened way through the sea, for the rescue of God's people, as the hosts of Pharaoh came up behind. It is the cry of the penitent publican pleading from the dust, "God be merciful to me a sinner." It is blind Bartimæus sitting bewildered by the way side, and craving for sight at the touch of Jesus. It is the despairing woman pressing through the throng, and stealing virtue from the hem of the Saviour's garment. It is the weary, ship-wrecked mariners of life everywhere, drifting too and fro on some boisterous Galilee and crying out: "Master, save us, or we perish." It is in short, the look of a contrite soul to Christ crucified.

It is all this, but it is more. It is the saving realization that Jesus *does love* the soul of the sinner; that He did come down from the purity of heaven to the defilements of earth, with a purpose of love on His pitying heart;

that He did go out on the trackless mountains of a guilty world to seek for wanderers; that He did in self-sacrificing love "lay down His life for the sheep." It is just this thought that brings Him so near to us. We can come to Him as a kinsman in the flesh, who is our Saviour; we can feel that the infinite One is our own.

When Martin Luther was laboring under deep conviction of sin, he reasoned thus with a faithful friend, who was seeking to lead him to the only source of help and comfort. "My guilt is so very great that I do not believe Christ can save me." "That is well," replied his friend; "if thou wert only the semblance of a sinner, then Jesus would only be to thee the semblance of a Saviour, but if thou feelest thyself to be a real sinner, then rejoice that Jesus is to thee a real Saviour." Luther recognized the force of the argument, and from that very hour experienced the blessedness of that rest, which Wesley afterwards described:

"All my trust on Thee is stayed,
All my help from Thee I bring."

"If Thou wilt," said a poor leper to Him one day, "Thou canst make me clean." Of His power to save him the leper seemed to be in no doubt, but likely, considering his own unworthi-

ness, he was not so sure that the Saviour was willing. But sooner would he have us doubt His existence than doubt His willingness to help and save. Not more willingly, ungrudgingly, gladly, did He give Himself to the cross of shame eighteen hundred years ago, than He gives Himself to-night to all who are waiting to receive Him. "Does Jesus love me, then?" said an ungodly stranger who had stepped into Exeter Hall, London, while the hymn was being sung. "If that be really so," he continued, "I will fly to the refuge; if He is any sinner's Saviour, He is mine."

Not only this, He is a Saviour for *every kind* of sinner, and so our hymn expresses it:

"Thou, O Christ, art all I want,
More than all in Thee I find;
Raise the fallen, cheer the faint,
Heal the sick, and lead the blind."

A fountain over-flowing, a sympathy unwearying, a treasury unfailing, a physician unfallible, an unchangeable friend, we find in Him. Are we afflicted, disconsolate, bereaved? Then He stood by the side of the widow of Nain, with His tears falling fast for her sorrows, with His almightiness giving back to her bosom, a son.

"The healing of His seamless dress,
Is by our beds of pain ;
We touch Him in life's throng and press,
And we are whole again."

Are we tempted, do the insidious wiles of evil steal in upon us, until our souls lie trembling in an almost defeat ? Then call mountain-top and desert to witness of His conflict with and victory over the angriest assaults of sin and turn for succor to His all-sufficient grace. Does the world seem cold and forbidding and friendless ? Then it never frowned on anyone, more than on Jesus. There is not a rugged place in all this wilderness journey where we cannot find the print of His wounded feet. He had not where to lay His blessed head, who was the Creator of worlds. A borrowed manger to be born in ; a borrowed home to live in ; a borrowed colt to ride upon ; and a place, when His work was done, in a borrowed grave.

Does the heart ever throb in an unexpressed sorrow until it almost breaks for relief ? Then that throb is felt in the heart of Him who prayed in the mountain at midnight, and knelt in Gethsemane alone. Do we not feel like singing over and over again, as we think of His availableness, of His ability to meet our every

need, of His willingness to do so, of our own weakness and want and waywardness :

“ Leave, ah ! leave me not alone ;
Still support and comfort me.”

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“ One of the most blessed days of my life,” said the saintly Duffield, “ when after my harp had long been silent I could sing again. A new song was put in my mouth, and before I was aware, I was singing, ‘ Jesus, lover of my soul.’ If there is anything in Christian experience of joy or sorrow, of affliction or prosperity, of life or death, that hymn,” he adds, “ is the hymn of the ages.”

“ I would rather have written that hymn of Wesley’s,” said Henry Ward Beecher, after a reference to his father’s death, “ than to have the fame of all the kings that ever reigned on earth. It is more glorious. There is more power in it. I would rather be the author of that hymn than possess all the gold of a Rothschild. All earthly treasures must perish and be lost, but that hymn shall go on singing, until the last trump brings forth the angel-band, and then I think it will mount up on some lip to the very presence of God.”

There are thousands of such testimonies as these, and eternity alone will be able to reveal

how many souls have been helped heavenward by its comforting words. Two things it declares, and they bind the believer with golden chains to the throne of God. Jesus Christ our sufficiency here, and our portion forever.

“ Plenteous grace with Thee is found,
Grace to cover all my sin ;
Let the healing streams abound,
Make and keep me pure within.”

As Matthew Henry puts it: “ All believers receive of Christ’s fulness. The greatest saints cannot live without Him; the weakest saints may live by Him.” A saving grace, to lift us from the pit; a sustaining grace, to keep us from the evil; and an abounding grace, which shall one day break forth into glory.

“ Thoa of life the fountain art,
Freely let me take of Thee ;
Spring Thou up within my heart,
Rise to all eternity.”

Oh, blessed fact, that however we may change our places, we shall never change the object of our loftiest affections; that whatever we lose, we can never lose that which we have learned to esteem “ better than life.” As the dove never rested until it returned to the ark; as the star never stopped until it stood over Bethlehem; as

the needle of the compass never ceases to vibrate until it points to the magnet, so immortal man finds no rest for his soul, no answer to its askings, no satisfaction to its deep-felt wants, until he rests in Jesus. When a surgeon was probing for a fatal bullet in a wound, which lay over the heart of a French soldier at Waterloo, the veteran exclaimed, "a little deeper, surgeon, and you will find the Emperor; he has my heart." So the love of all loves in the believer's soul is love for Jesus. He has our hearts.

"When all other spells have lost their magic; when no name of old endearment, when no voice of long-watching tenderness can disperse the lethargy of death, then the message of eternal peace, the swift heart-throbs of heaven-born desire, the divine communings with a better land, are felt within the soul, and the name "which is above every name," pronounced by one who knows it, will kindle the last animation in the eye of death." Charles Trumbell White, a well-known philanthropist of New York, when visiting in Bellevue Hospital one evening, was asked to visit an English sailor in one of the wards. When he reached the man he was apparently unconscious, but stooping down he repeated, to what seemed to be the "dull, cold ear of death," the words of this hymn, and departed

without obtaining a response. But at midnight the sailor seemed suddenly to arouse, sat up in his cot, and with a clearly audible voice repeated verse after verse of the hymn, until he came to the last. With faltering accents he spake the words:

"Thou of life the fountain art,
Freely let me take of Thee ;"

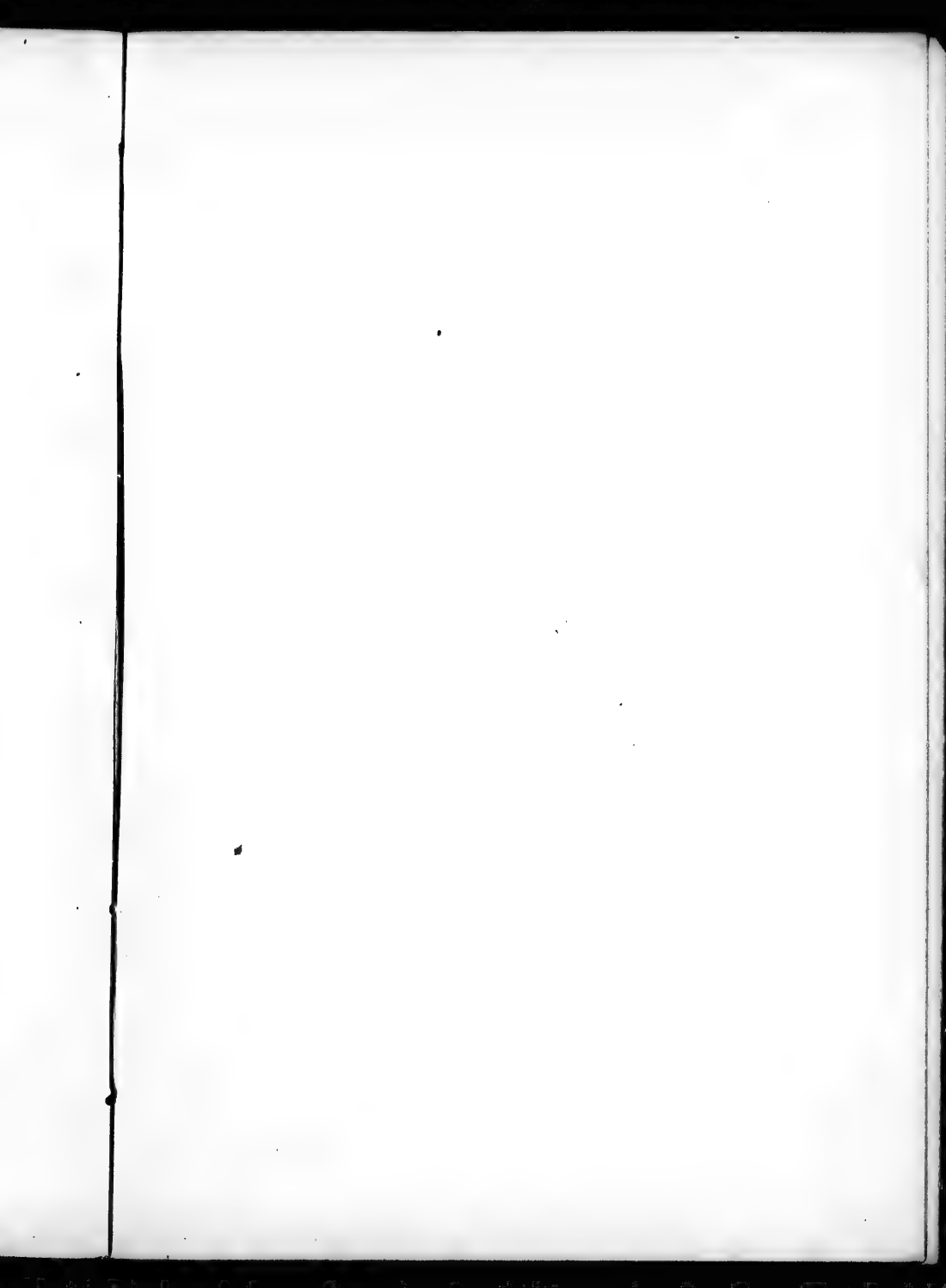
then slowly sank back and immediately expired. The attendants were amazed, and the meaning of that strange experience will remain shrouded in mystery until all is made clear in the light of eternity.

"Jesus, lover of my soul," and the soul that casts anchor in this haven will never disappoint its possessor. "Other refuge have I none," and when the storms of death and the judgment come we shall need none other. "Thou of life the fountain art," and stooping down at its living waters we have felt already the thrill of immortal blessedness.

With all its beauty it is a song of time. We shall scarcely sing it when we rest at home. No refuge will be needed, where no tempests of temptation ever assail, where no billows of affliction ever roll. No healer will be needed where sickness never enters; no grace will be

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sought for, where defilement is not known. But let it sing on as the prayer of our lives. Let it sing on till the world has heard it, and then, when the last great billow shall arise on the sea of time, and the chilly blast of death shall sweep us in from the toilsome voyage to the eternal shore, as the storm-wearied bird found refuge on the bosom of Wesley, our world-wearied souls shall surely find rest on the bosom of Jesus—eternal rest.



7
*Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee;
Let the water and the blood,
From Thy riven side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure,
Cleanse me from its guilt and power.*

*Not the labors of my hands
Can fulfil Thy law's demands;
Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears for ever flow,
All for sin could not atone;
Thou must save, and Thou alone.*

*Nothing in my hand I bring;
Simply to Thy cross I cling;
Naked, come to Thee for dress;
Helpless, look to Thee for grace;
Foul, I to the fountain fly:
Wash me, Saviour, or I die.*

*While I draw this fleeting breath,
When my eyelids close in death,
When I soar through tracts unknown,
See Thee on Thy judgment-throne;
Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee.*

THE SOUL'S GREAT ROCK.

"For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them : and that Rock was Christ."—I CORINTHIANS x. 4.

"Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in thee."

"A LIVING and dying hymn for the holiest believer in the world," was the strange title of an hymn which appeared in the March number of the *Gospel Magazine*, 1776. It was written over a fictitious signature, and the author for some time remained unknown. Everybody sang it with the voice or with the understanding, and soon it became, as it since has remained, one of the most popular hymns in the English language. It soon lost the title prefixed by its author, though it lost not the character indicated in it, and has since been familiarly known as the "Rock of Ages."

Sometimes a hymn becomes disassociated from its author. The production is enshrined in a thousand hearts, while its producer is forgotten.

"Nearer my God to Thee," "Jerusalem the Golden," and "He Leadeth Me," are popular hymns with the worshipping world. They are sacred in the home as well as in the sanctuary, and yet how few of those who are familiar with these hymns are familiar with their authors. It is said that in the eighteenth century all Europe was carolling the songs of an unknown writer, who, when he was discovered, proved to be a miserable leper, who carried a bell as he passed along the streets, to warn people of his approach.

On the other hand there are many hymns which call up with their mention the names of their authors. Charles Wesley and his "Jesus, Lover of My Soul;" Thomas Moore and his "Come Ye Disconsolate;" Philip Doddridge and his "Happy Day;" Reginald Heber and his "Missionary Hymn," stand forever closely associated. But above all others in this respect is the hymn of our study, and so long as the "Rock of Ages" remains immortal as the hymn-prayer of the world, it will render immortal at the same time the name and memory of Augustus Montague Toplady.

Born at Farnham, Surrey, England, in the year 1740, the subject of this brief memoir was the second son of Major Richard Toplady, who fell at the siege of Cartagena, in Spain, a few

years after his son was born. The only child of a widowed mother, he gave evidence very early in life of an order of intellect much above the average. Catherine Bate was a woman of excellent judgment and exceptional abilities, and she devoted her life to the moulding and development of this interesting character. This devotion was richly recompensed, for the impress and example of a godly mother very soon became apparent in the life of her child.

When Toplady was sixteen years of age, and residing with his mother in Ireland, through mere curiosity he attended in a neighboring village a service conducted by a plain evangelical preacher, who discoursed from this text, found in the second chapter of Ephesians, "Ye who sometime were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ." As the preacher described, in simple but earnest words, the departure of the sinner from God, the terrible result of that departure, and the reality of salvation through the sacrifice of Christ, the tender conscience of the youth was awakened. He trembled under the power of the convicting Spirit, and that very day found refuge at the cross. "By the grace of God, under the ministry of that dear messenger of truth," writes Toplady in after years, "that day was for me the day of decision.

Strange," he adds, "that I, who had been so greatly privileged with the means of grace, should be brought to a knowledge of salvation, amidst a handful of God's people, met together in a barn, and under the ministry of one who could scarcely write his name. Surely the excellency of such power must be of God; it can not be of man."

Soon after his conversion he commenced his studies for the Gospel ministry, and was ordained to the Episcopal priesthood in Trinity Church, Dublin, at the early age of twenty-two. In his subscription to the articles of the Church, he wrote his signature four different times, to express his devout assent to the principles in them. Soon after he removed to a living in the shire of Somerset, England, but was after some years transferred to London, where he remained during the rest of his life.

His talents as a preacher were truly remarkable. His voice, it is said, pealed forth with such commanding solemnity that apathy was impossible. Devotion and sanctity seemed to emanate from his ethereal countenance, as the balm of the Gospel flowed forth from his lips to the hearts and consciences of men. Importunate exhortation followed close upon convincing argument, and the prayer he breathed seemed a very con-

verse with God. As he remarks himself, after preaching, "I was all on fire for God, and the fire, I verily believed, leaped forth from heart to heart. Never once has the Lord disappointed my hopes, when He has said to my soul, 'I will be with thee.'"

Like his divine Master his spirit was "meek and lowly," and his aim, he tells us, was always this, "to merit the highest and be content with the lowest." His fervent piety at times developed into spells of rapturous devotion. He actually "walked with God" along the lofty plain of heavenly-mindedness, but not without those fluctuations of faith and feeling so often characteristic of such a temperament; nor could he have written that beautiful hymn, so bounteous with spiritual pathos and comfort:

" Your harps, ye trembling saints,
Down from the willows take ;"

had his own harp not sometimes been hung upon the willows of grief. "Here let me leave it on thankful record for my comfort and support in future times of trial and desertion, should it please God to send them, that I never was lower in the valley than last night, and never higher on the mount than to-day." And this he wrote of a terrible depression which weighed upon his

soul, on one Saturday evening while preparing for the duties of the Sabbath. "The Lord cast me down, but did not forsake me," he adds, "and never will."

" Soon shall our doubts and fears,
Subside at His control ;
His loving-kindness shall break through
The midnight of the soul."

Naturally of a frail constitution, it was painfully evident to his friends that his earthly service would not be long. Consumption set in, and its insidious work was quickened by close and excessive study. He was indomitable in spirit through all, and several times was found in the pulpit when only able to announce his text and retire. At the age of thirty-eight his last sermon was preached from 2 Peter i. 13, 14: "I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance ; knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me." And Toplady was ready.

"It seemed to those who waited on his ministry," his biographer tells us, "that already he was divested of the body and participant in the happiness of the Church triumphant." "The consolations of God are so abundant," he said,

during the time of his lingering sickness, "that He leaves me nothing to pray for. My prayers are all converted into praise. I enjoy a heaven already in my heart." When told as he neared the end that his pulse beat feebler and feebler, he cheerfully replied, "Why, that is a good sign ; sickness is no affliction ; pain is no curse ; death is no dissolution ; and, blessed be God, if my pulse beats feebler and feebler, my heart every hour beats stronger for glory." Again and again he called for the eighth chapter of Romans at the thirty-third verse : "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ," etc., and when it was read, he would joyfully exclaim, "I find that as the bottles of Heaven are emptied they fill up again ; my soul is clasped to God with a golden chain ; the sky of my soul is cloudless, cloudless ; come, Lord Jesus, come quickly."

About an hour before his death he rallied a little, and his physicians spoke encouragingly of his prospects for longer life. "No, no," said the exulting saint, "I shall die, for no mortal could endure such manifestations of God's glory and live." Shortly afterwards, whilst repeating a hymn of his own composition :

" Deathless principle arise,
Jesus calls thee to the skies,"

he peacefully slept.

His life was a bright reflection of Christ's. God's chariot of fire came down to translate him, and the heritage he left is ours. The mantle he dropped, was caught up by the world and handed down with a thrill of holy inspiration to its successive generations, as they march on singing in the spirit of the immortal Toplady :

" Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee."

Never, we may safely say, was a hymn more popular; and never more deservedly so. "It has," as Dr. John Ker remarks of the twenty-third Psalm, "like some gentle stream a lengthened history, where it sparkles and flows in the open daylight, and its history would be longer still, could we only follow it to its quiet resting-places in hidden hearts, which only the day of God will declare."

It has already been translated into more than half the written languages of the earth. It sweeps with majestic chord through the lofty arches of England's Westminster. It warms up the Esquimaux heart among the snow-huts of Greenland. Its echoes ascend from the Hottentot's hovel amid the forests of Africa. Blown onward by the zephyrs of Christianity's morn-

ing, its refrain is whispered over the temples of idolatry, like the siren song which presages their destruction. Yea, up from the broad sanctuary of this world's true worship, it rises and blends with songs of Heaven.

Gladstone has caught up its sentiment and has lived its spirit at the helm of the state. He has translated its lines into time-honored Latin, and now it is heard among the vespers of Rome.

A missionary tells us of a New Zealander chief, whose grandfather massacred the first messenger of the Gospel to his island shores, whose forefathers, a century ago, launched their canoes over the bodies of human sacrifices to propitiate the favor of the gods they worshipped. Transformed to-day by the elevating influences of the Gospel, the chief now leads forth his tribe through the streets of their native city in religious processions, marching to the melody of their favorite hymn :

“ Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee.”

Dr. Pomeroy remarks, “That when visiting Constantinople, he went to worship in an Arminian church. Many of the worshippers, while offering praise, were affected to tears, and

enquiring the reason, he found it was this: the people were singing, with remarkable fervor, a Turkish translation of these heaven-inspired lines, which told them so plainly of the wonders of salvation."

It is pre-eminently a song of the home. Its influence has purified, as with the sunlight of Heaven, miserable garrets long desecrated and darkened by evil; and within those homes, whose roofs are like to the overshadowing wings of a Cherubim, whose air is purity, whose communion is love, no other words are so entwined with their tenderest memories as the words of this hymn. It has mingled its notes in the mother's lullaby, as she prayed by the cradle that her child might be saved. It has kindled animation in the eye of the grandsire, when the days of his pilgrimage were almost ended.

Ever-blessed song! it comes to the Christian heart like a melody of heaven, a stray note from the sonnets of paradise. It sings on forever. We cannot forget it. It hovers over life in perpetual benediction. It is rich with comfort in the hour of death. And why? We discover the secret in that great reality of all realities, that Jesus Christ is the rock of the soul. "The same yesterday, to-day and forever,"—the

always-abiding and ever-accessible refuge of the sinner.

“Rock of Ages, cleve for me.”

The same figure frequently appears in the imagery of Scripture, and illustrates, if it does not in many instances typify, the same great truth. There is Moses on the mountain-top with God, hidden from the gleam of His ineffable holiness and receiving blessing in “the cleft of a rock.” There is starving Israel around the “rock of Horeb” in the barren desert, while water bursts forth from its flinty bosom, at the touch of faith. There is penitent David lifted up from the “miry clay” of iniquity and rejoicing with his feet on “a rock.” There is the sorrow-depressed believer of every age, with his prayer finding voice in the words of inspiration: “What time my heart is overwhelmed, lead me to the rock that is higher than I.”

They all have meaning, for they point to a reality: “The shadow of a great rock in a weary land;” an Eddystone light-tower for the storm-tossed mariner; a refuge-place for benighted travellers on the Alpine steeps of life, the smitten heart of the Lord of Calvary pouring itself forth with double virtue in atoning efficacy and sanctifying power.

“Let the water and the blood,
From Thy wounded side that flowed,
Be of sin the double cure,
Cleanse me from its guilt and power.”

There is omnipotence to save, but there is helplessness clinging to omnipotence. There is infinite mercy at the cross, and there is misery fleeing for mercy. There is the pleading sinner's “Let me,” and there is the tender Saviour's, “Come.”

And this rock of ours is the *only* rock! Trust in the “general forbearance” of God; trust in the “time enough yet;” trust in morality; trust in a death-bed repentance? No, these are not rocks at all, but shifting sand which the storms of death and judgment shall prove to be fatally insufficient. They are sinking to-night beneath the feet of those who are trusting them. There is no other refuge but Jesus. He is the Gibraltar of the soul.

Not so much by obedience at Sinai, as by faith at Calvary; not so much by a well-kept creed, as by a Christ-kept heart; not so much place in an earthly sanctuary, as by a low place at the feet of Jesus, is this rest realized, this refuge found. What means yonder decrepid form in a Chinese pit? Let the missionary answer: She is a woman of eighty years, who has toiled through

her weary widowhood to gain higher life for her soul, by digging that pit, which is twenty-five feet deep and fifteen feet square; because she is taught that by that slavish penance, even with the heathen curse of widowhood upon her, she pleases the gods. But the strain of the Gospel has told her of Jesus, and she stands forth now in the liberty of His salvation to sing with an emphasis which we may never understand, who have not experienced the bondage from which she has been delivered:

“Not the labor of my hands’
Can fulfil the law’s demands;
Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears forever flow,
All for sin could not atone;
Thou must save, and Thou alone.”

An aged saint was once asked, what was the Gospel she believed, and how she believed it? Her answer was this, with the profoundest of truths in its very simplicity: “God is well satisfied with His Son, that is the Gospel I believe; I am well satisfied with Him too, and that is how I believe it.” She had searched the heart of the doctrines of Christianity; the work of salvation is accepted in heaven, the boon of salva-

tion is extended to earth, and "whosoever will may come" to the rock which was cleft for sinners.

Behind the pulpit in the Chapel of Faith, Mamedorf, Switzerland, a large figure which represents Christ on the cross is to be seen. Inscribed beneath the figure is the German word *Ich*, the English I. Through the *Ich* is drawn a deep cancelling mark, and side by side with this is written the German *Er*, the English He, and the teaching is plain: "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." "With His stripes we are healed." Would you learn the meaning of the cancelled I? Then it is only this from a sinner on his knees:

"Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to the cross I cling;
Naked, come to Thee for dress;
Helpless, look to Thee for grace;
Foul, I to the fountain fly:
Wash me, Saviour, or I die."

It is the all and everything of Christ, brought down and given for the sinner's nothing. His gold for our dross; His robe of spotless righteous-

ness for our rags ; His precious eyesalve for our blindness ; His very life that we may live.

Jesus, a shelter from the storms of life, its sins, its uncertainties, its sorrows. A shelter which no storm can ever destroy is this, "Rock of Ages." "Cling close to the rock, Johnnie; cling close to the rock," said a little girl with remarkable presence of mind to her younger brother, when caught in a tunnel by a hurrying train. She had placed him in a niche on one side of the track, and clinging to the rock on the other side, as the train went thundering by, her clear voice rang out on the ears of the passengers in thrilling accents, "Cling close to the rock, Johnnie; cling close to the rock." The life was saved, the brakes were applied, the story was learned while tears filled many an eye, and the train moved on. But the sequel remains to be told. A few stations farther on the way, an aged father is parting with his son, who is leaving the quiet country home for life in the city. The possibilities of temptation and fall and ruin rise up in that father's mind, and with his Christian heart lifted up in faith unto the Christian's God, he grasped his boy by the hand, and with a voice all trembling in tender emotion, said, "Robert, my child, cling close to the rock ; cling close to the rock."

Jesus, a shelter in the solemn hour of death. "People talk of looking back on a well-spent life," said Rowland Hill on his death-bed. "I look up at this solemn moment to Him who gave His life to redeem me from sin, and only there dare a sinner look."

The first, and I may say my only pastor, the Rev. James Cameron, of Chatsworth, Ontario, a man far above the average in sterling ability and Christ-like disposition; a man to whom I owe the deepest debt of gratitude that heart can feel for influence and instruction in early life, was accustomed to say: "It is natural for us to recoil at the thought of death; though, indeed, there is nothing for the Christian to fear. It is a fearful wrench that separates the immortal soul from the mortal body." And yet, when one beautiful summer evening the sun was touching the horizon, and his loved ones standing around his bed, were painfully conscious that the hour of his departure had come, he requested his daughter to sing the hymn, which had been his favorite all through life, this "Rock of Ages." With remarkable composure his daughters sang verse after verse, until she came to the last, and as she softly sang it, the saintly and beloved minister of Chatsworth closed his eyes on earthly scenes, and fell asleep in Jesus, as quietly and calmly as had the

life of day gone out at that moment in the west. Death had no sting for him, for he knew death's Conqueror, and ere the last note of earth's love-song had fallen on his ear, he had caught up the music of the "new song" of heaven. He has joined in it, and our thought of it is sweeter because he has.

It is ours still to sing the old song. Let us sing it often and earnestly.

"Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee."

*The spacious firmament on high,
With all the blue ethereal sky,
And spangled heavens, a shining frame,
Their great Original proclaim.*

*The unwearied sun, from day to day,
Does His Creator's power display,
And publishes to every land
The work of an Almighty hand.*

*Soon as the evening shades prevail,
The moon takes up the wondrous tale,
And nightly to the listening earth
Repeats the story of her birth :*

*While all the stars that round her burn,
And all the planets in their turn,
Confirm the tidings as they roll,
And spread the truth from pole to pole.*

*What though in solemn silence all
Move round the dark terrestrial ball ?
What though no real voice, nor sound,
Amidst their radiant orbs be found ?*

*In reason's ear they all rejoice,
And utter forth a glorious voice;
Forever singing as they shine,
" The Hand that made us is divine."*

GOD IN CREATION.

"The heavens declare the glory of God ; and the firmament sheweth His handy-work."—PSALM xix. 1.

"And spangled heavens, a shining frame,
Their great Original proclaim."

GOD, as He is revealed in His work of Creation, in His work of Providence, and in His crowning work of Redemption, is the great primary doctrine lying at the foundation of every true system of theology. It is indeed the sum and substance of theology—the mighty trunk of truth growing up in its three great divisions, to which all relative spiritual teachings stand in the relation of inherent and dependent branches.

God the Creator, and we the creature ; God the Sovereign, and we the subjects ; God the Redeemer, and we the redeemed, are well defined parts of a harmonious whole, and when we speak of one relationship in words of praise, we magnify the others. When Addison wrote his hymn of "Creation," he acknowledged the exist-

ence of an over-ruling Providence; and when Cowper wrote his beautiful hymn of "Providence," his thoughts soared sublimely to the work that redeemed. Each work has its place in the Divine economy, and hence the importance of a separate treatment.

To-night we shall seek to find with Addison, in a brief study of his exalted theme, a proof of the existence and a revelation of the nature and attributes of Him, who, by the word of His power, created all things, visible and invisible. "Who stretched out the heavens like a curtain."

Joseph Addison was born in Wiltshire, England, in the year 1672, during the period of a moral and religious transition, which immediately preceded the accession of William III. to the throne of England. He was a child of the rectory; his father, the Rev. Lancelot Addison, being rector of Milston, and afterwards Dean of Lichfield, where the poet was brought up. His mother was a sister of the Bishop of Bristol, and a woman of great piety. So that the atmosphere which surrounded the poet in his youth, was in every way congenial to the growth of that reverent and devotional spirit, which we find maintained through all the changes of his after life. Another of the many living commentaries on the words of wisdom: "Train up a

child in the way he shall go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."

In early manhood he gained the favor of Pope and Dryden, and afterwards worked his way to the court of royalty. He was educated at London and Cambridge. Then he travelled extensively on the Continent, with the object of perfecting his literary attainments. Upon his return he suddenly became famous by the writing of "The Campaign." This was a poem of five hundred lines, in which he celebrated for the nation the deeds of Marlborough, who was then the hero of Blenheim, and commanding general in the war with France.

In personal character Addison was greatly esteemed, and being possessed of exceptional gifts, he was speedily raised to the highest political positions in the gift of his country. In these connections he became the principal contributor to the famous *Spectator*; "without doubt," someone says, "the most elegant and popular miscellany in English literature." A man of powerful convictions, he fearlessly exposed the popular evils of his time, and did much to lay the firm foundation of high-toned journalism.

His contributions to various periodicals were numerous, and always exhibited a pure morality

as well as a predisposition to the loftier spiritual. One of his papers on "Special periods for devotion," gives evidence of the current of his thinking. In it he makes this statement: "That the wisest of men of all ages and countries were renowned for piety and virtue; so that the most eminent for learning have likewise been the most eminent for their adherence to the principles of revealed religion. They have generally been men whose hopes were filled with immortality, and bright with the prospect of future rewards."

✓ The picture of human life with its ambitions, uncertainties, and disappointments, which he so beautifully draws in the allegory known as "The vision of Mirza," bears testimony to the fact that his own life was not exempt from common anxieties, and that he was a close observer of the lives of others. It is interesting to know that the careful reading of this allegory made the earliest spiritual impressions on the mind and heart of Robert Burns, whose own career supplied such a forcible illustration of the lesson it imparts.

✓ Equally famous with the "Vision of Mirza," are his beautiful meditations among the tombs of Westminster Abbey. Every line of this well-

known mosaic bears the stamp of a master-mind, who has voiced the sentiments, and forethought the reflection of all others, who have visited that famous sanctuary-sepulchre of London. "When I look upon the tombs of the great," he writes, "every emotion of envy dies within me; when I read the epitaphs of the beautiful, every inordinate desire goes out; when I meet with the grief of parents upon a tombstone, my heart melts with compassion; when I see the tombs of parents themselves, I consider the vanity of grieving for those who must quickly follow; when I see kings lying side by side with those who have deposed them; when I consider rival wits placed side by side, and the holy men that divided the world with their contests and disputes; I reflect with sorrow and astonishment on the little competitions, factions and debates of mankind. When I read the several dates on the tombs of some that died yesterday, and some six hundred years ago, I consider that great day when we, all of us, shall be contemporaries and make our appearance together."

Several hymns are traced to his authorship, among which is that admirable Psalm of the adoring and grateful heart, found in the hymn-collections of every people:

“ When all Thy mercies, O my God,
My rising soul surveys,
Transported with the view, I'm lost
In wonder, love and praise.”

Another hymn of his, perhaps not so generally known, is rendered famous by the circumstances under which it was written, and remains a memorial of remarkable faith. When journeying through Europe, Addison embarked at Marseilles for a trip on the Mediterranean. A storm arose off the shore of Italy, which grew so violent that all was given up for lost. The captain and sailors in fear and despair, were confessing their sins to a Capuchin monk, who happened to be on board on his way to Rome. While all were in a state of consternation, Addison sat in the cabin, as calm and composed, in the assurance of Divine protection, as Paul the Apostle was sixteen centuries before on the shores of Melita, not far distant. It was there he expressed the musing of his soul in the lines since familiarly known as “The Traveller's Hymn.”

“ How are Thy servants blest, O Lord !
How sure is their defence !
Eternal Wisdom is their guide,
Their help, Omnipotence.

“ When by the dreadful tempest borne
High on the broken wave,

They know Thou art not slow to hear,
Nor impotent to save.

“ Our life, whilst Thou preservest life,
A sacrifice shall be ;
And death, when death shall be our lot,
Shall join our souls to Thee.”

So was it for Addison in life, and of death his words were a joyful prophecy. “ Having served his generation according to the will of God,” at the early age of forty-seven he was carried off by the hand of insatiable disease. He breathed his last words strong in the assurance of life eternal, cheerfully remarking to his stepson, who stood by his side, in one of those short, weighty sentences, by which the great in life are made greater in death, “ Behold how a Christian can die.” His remains were conveyed to a resting place of honor within the Jerusalem Chamber of that world-famed Abbey, wherein he so grandly mused on the theme of immortal greatness and mortal man. And among the tablets erected to the memory of the renowned in that magnificent “ Valhalla,” there is found, in the poet’s corner of the Eastern Transept, one upon which the figurative genii are brought out in beautiful relief, and above this the inscription, “ Joseph Addison.” And I believe that name is written on the more enduring marble of God’s great

book of approval, as the hymn of his life keeps it fresh in the memory of all times.

By one who had visited the scene, the old Cathedral-close at Lichfield, in the vicinity of which the youthful Addison delighted to wander, is thus described : "It was evening when, for the first time, we entered that sacred enclosure. The sun had gone down and the outer world was growing dim, but everything visible offered an introduction to the invisible. Here was the "Dean's walk," an overshadowed avenue which opened towards a neighboring hill, standing in clear, bold outline against the twilight sky. On the summit arose the tower of St. Chad, from which, tradition tell us, the angels used to sing. The stars of heaven were reflected in the mirror of the pool at its base, when a thrilling harmony came trembling from the chancel, as the choir refrained their to-morrow's *benedictus*. Just then the rising moon threw her light above the horizon and gave to the picture its inspiring touch."

It was here the muse of the spirit awakened the responsive chord of Addison's being, which sang to the world his inimitable psalm :

"The spacious firmament on high,
With all the blue ethereal sky,
And spangled heavens, a shining frame,
Their great Original proclaim."

To the untutored Hottentot of Africa, who looks up to the expanse of a tropical sky, the reflection is the same as it is to the Christian philosopher who looks out to-night to call the stars by their names. With a different signification to each it may be, but with the same conclusion—"There is a creative God." "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handywork"—is a pen-picture drawn by the Psalmist of Israel in ages past, and it exactly expresses the reverent sentiment of to-day. The material universe proclaims the *existence* of a God.

It cannot, we grant, provide absolute proof of such an existence, but the order and design which is everywhere discoverable in it, give evidence of the presence and plan of a superior being. In a musical instrument, when we observe a number of strings producing harmony, we conclude that a skilful musician has attuned them. When we see ten thousand men marshalled under different colors, yet acting in orderly concert, we naturally infer the presence of a commander whose order they obey. When we see the twenty-six letters of the alphabet so arranged into words and sentences as to make a book, which expresses a continuation of thought, we infer the existence of a composer who set

them. In no one of these cases would the arrangement be attributed to chance or accident, and chance cannot have place in either the creation or orderly relation of worlds. Everything about us, as well as above us, argues the absolutely necessary existence of a first cause. Such a first cause must, in proportion to the order and magnitude of the work performed, have intelligence to plan as well as power to execute. And this intelligence and power we believe must reside in a personal being whom we call God. "No life without preceding life" is a formula of science everywhere admitted, and back of all material beginnings there was certainly a beginning which was not material. In the first verse of Genesis we read, "In *a* beginning God created the heavens and the earth;" but in the first verse of John we read, "In *the* beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

One evening when Napoleon Bonaparte was on his voyage from Egypt, a group of his officers were conversing on the quarter-deck about the existence of a God. It was a calm, cloudless, brilliant night, and "the heaven's the work of God's fingers," canopied them gloriously. As officer after officer presented the arguments of athiestic thought, and flippantly asserted, "There

is no God," Napoleon suddenly stopped before them, and in those tones of authority that always commanded attention, said, "Gentlemen, your arguments are all very fine, but tell me, who made those worlds?"

"In the sun of the noonday, the star of the night,
In the storm cloud of darkness, the rainbow of light,
Turn where you may, from the sky to the sod,
Where can ye gaze that ye find not a God?"

Granted the existence, the material universe exhibits the *power* of God.

Have you ever stood by the ocean and watched the great billow rush on and on to throw itself thundering on the shore, and did you ever fancy you could stay its course and hurl it back to the depths whence it came? Did you ever stand beneath the leaden, lowering sky, and watch the lightning leap and flash athwart the gloom, and did you ever think you could grasp its bolt and change its fiery path? We speak of the power of light and heat and electricity, of science and law and empire, yet these are but faint permissions of His energy, who shot these myriad worlds along their orbits and bade them march on for ever. "He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of earth."

We borrow an illustration from the confessions of Augustine: "I asked the earth, and it said, 'I am not He.' I asked the sea, and the depths replied, 'We are not thy God.' I asked the breezes, and they whispered in surprise, 'We are not thy God.' I asked the heavens, the sun and the moon and the stars, and they replied, 'Neither are we the God whom thou seekest.' Then I turned myself to all and said, ye have declared to me of my God, that ye are not He, tell me, I pray you, somewhat about Him, and, with a united voice that rolled on and on in eternal testimony, they exclaimed, 'He made us all!'"

"The unwearied sun from day to day
Does his Creator's *power* display,
And publishes to every land
The work of an almighty hand."

The material universe exhibits the *wisdom* of God. It is possible for the mind to conceive of power impelling to action or motion, and yet operating blindly, without seeking or attaining an end, but when we behold in the universe a systematized plan, with end and purpose designated, with order and regularity everywhere observed, we come at once to the natural conclusion, that the being of infinite power is a being of infinite wisdom.

Astronomers inform us that beyond or outside the system of which our sun is the centre, by the aid of powerful telescopes, nearly one hundred millions of stars have been discovered in fixed locations, each of which is supposed to be the centre of a system vastly more extensive than our own. All these, it is conjectured, revolve in regular orbit around some central sphere, which is the centre of all attractive or centripetal energy; and, it is added, that some of them are so distant from our earth, that, although shining since the dawn of creation, their light has not reached us yet, though travelling at the rate of nearly 200,000 miles a second.

There never was a time when there was no time; and space admits of no measurement whatever. "Imagine," says John Locke, the philosopher, "some being reaching the very confines of space and stretching out his hand where space is not, and in the very act he creates it; for space is measured by the objects in it."

The finite mind is completely lost in such a contemplation, and yet the Almighty can marshall these worlds into order as a general marshall his battalions. "He telleth the number of the stars, He calleth them all by name." As the writer of the Book of Job sublimely put it four thousand years ago, with marvellous

scientific exactness in his statements: "Canst thou bind the sweet influences of the Pleiades or loose the bands of Orion? Canst thou bring forth Mazzaroth in his season? or canst thou guide Arcturus with his sons?" "Day unto day uttereth speech," writes the Psalmist, "and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, their voice is not heard." And Bishop Horne, with a vivid conception of poetic imagery, remarks, "The day and the night, like the two parts of a responding choir, chant forth alternately the praises of God."

In the earliest works on Astronomy the stars are represented as singing aloud in their courses the marvels of divine wisdom. And old Pythagoras, who had traversed the mazes of the vast unknown, ages before Leverrier and Herschell, remarks: "The relation of the celestial bodies one to another, is so delicately adjusted as to cause by their motion sweet and harmonious sounds." To these sounds he gave the name, "The music of the spheres." "The music," he adds, "fills the universe everywhere, but is of too elevated a character to be heard or appreciated by dull-eared mortals." David, however, heard it in his life's inner sanctuary, and his soul responded in Psalm. Addison, too, lived close to the beating heart of nature; he caught

up the sentiment of universal praise, and rolled it onwards :

“ In reason’s ear they all rejoice,
And utter forth a glorious voice ;
Forever singing as they shine,
The hand that made us is Divine.”

And, lastly, the material universe beautifully illustrates the *faithfulness* of God. “ In them hath He set a tabernacle for the sun, which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race.” Never once has God’s messengers of light to our world forgotten to rise. Thousands of years drift swiftly away, but the bells God has swung in the tower of the centuries beat out to-day the accurate time.

“ Twenty minutes after five,” said one professor of Astronomy to another in the observatory of Harvard College, “ a certain star will cross the line of vision.” He had ascertained that fact from a little book of astronomical tables which lay on his desk. The one professor lay prone upon his back, gazing upon the heavens through the great brass tube. The other stood near by with his eye on a chronometer clock, and holding a small tack hammer in his hand. All was stillness as the moments fled by, when two distinct sounds within the same fraction of a

second broke the impressive silence "The star!" exclaimed the observer, and at the very same moment the other tapped his hammer on the desk. That table had been based on calculations a thousand years old, and yet at twenty minutes after five, simultaneous with the click of the hammer, there marched up through the heavens, millions of miles away, one of God's stars, keeping his covenant of eternal fidelity, and rolling on silently in its appointed orbit.

Oh, there is no wrinkle on the brow of eternity! The heavens may be rolled up as a parchment, the elements of the earth may melt with fervent heat, but "the Word of God abideth forever."

I muse again on that galaxy of worlds, moulded and garnished by an almighty hand, and return to a thought of self. "The atom of an atom world," a single breathing in the infinite life, and the words of the Psalmist come to remembrance: "What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? And the son of man, that Thou visitest him?" when a new thought steals in upon my soul, my Father made them all; He controls them all; He is before them all. He has His lofty thoughts that pierce beyond the stars, but He has His lowly thoughts, that bend down to paint the lily, and He thinks of me, He thinks

of you. An atom still of an atom world, but a creature redeemed. I know of a wisdom which is wiser than that which designed these worlds. I know of a power that is mightier than that which gave them their motion. I know of a faithfulness truer than that which holds them in their orbits. The same wisdom, the same power, the same faithfulness, but in grander exercise. It is the wisdom that designed a creature's salvation; a power that brought Jesus Christ to the Cross, and proclaims to the uttermost, "omnipotent to save," and it is the faithfulness that says to the Christian heart, "I will never leave thee, I will never forsake thee."

A single thread on the lens of a telescope will shut out the sun from the observer, and a single sin on the lens of the soul may shut out the light of salvation. But, blessed be God, "the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin." We may not know much about the heavens above, but if we know the Christ, the "Sun of Righteousness," we have a heaven within us." "The heavens declare the glory of God," and the study is ennobling; but here is the glory that excelleth.

"A God in nature is a God above me; a God in providence is a God beyond me; but a God in Christ is a God for me, a God with me. He is my God."



*God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform ;
He plants His footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.*

*Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never-failing skill,
He treasures up His bright designs,
And works His sovereign will.*

*Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take :
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head.*

*Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His grace ;
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.*

*His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour ;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower.*

*Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan His work in vain ;
God is His own interpreter,
And He will make it plain.*

GOD IN PROVIDENCE.

"What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter"—JOHN xiii. 17.

"God is His own interpreter,
And He will make it plain."

WILLIAM COWPER was born into this world amid the throes of moral and spiritual revolution. It was a world in its spirit very averse to him, yet sorely in need of him. True spirituality, the spring of Miltonic grandeur and Puritanical power in the 17th century, was now almost extinct. The Church had become degraded into a mere tool of political forces. Society was severed into higher and lower, by lines of distinction so sharply drawn as to preclude all possibility of sympathy or brotherhood. Christianity, with its modern representatives of the overbearing Pharisee and the down-trodden publican, had forgotten the fact that its Lord and Master had supped with the poor and censured the rich, and hence the hostility with

which the so-called "upper classes" received the doctrines of dissenting religion when they came.

Into such a world was the poet born, on the 15th day of November, 1731. But a change was at hand. Good men were sorely needed, and God provided them. John Howard, the philanthropist, was a few years old when Cowper was born; John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, was past twenty-eight; and George Whitfield, "the prince of preachers," whose spells of oratory afterwards electrified both Europe and America, was seventeen.

William Cowper, like Addison, was a child of the rectory. His father was chaplain to King George the Second. His mother was a woman of tender sympathies and deep devotion, a character which she in a large degree transmitted to her offspring. She died when her son was only six, and seldom has a child lost more in a mother. Fifty years after her death the poet writes: "I think of her with love and tenderness each day of my life, and every creature which has any affinity to my mother is dear to me." "A mother-worshipping child goes seldom far astray," is a proverb which holds good, with countless illustrations, in the life of to-day.

The religious inclinations of Cowper were clearly pronounced in early life. His spirit was

reverent and his convictions deep. After an uneventful course through school and college, he was admitted to the bar in the Inner Temple at the age of twenty-three. He became a prominent member of the "Nonsense Club," which was composed of the leading literary characters of his day, and in this connection the genius of the poet was quickly recognized.

Discontentment with his associations and manner of life, led him to abandon the practice of law and devote himself entirely to literary pursuits. His life so far had not been openly irreligious, neither was it particularly religious. He had felt the pangs of spiritual conviction, and he had more than once been driven to his knees in earnest prayerfulness as he returned from the unrelished, unsatisfactory pleasures of the "Nonsense Club;" but he was not yet converted. The Spirit of God was leading the way to the sunlit heights of realized religion, but, as has often been the experience of the most ardent seekers, leading the way through the toilsome valley of soul-tribulation to reach those heights.

Once the poet determined to seek the retirement of a monastery, and give himself entirely to spiritual devotions; but, dissuaded by his friends, he relinquished the idea.

Shortly afterwards the brooding shadows of

spiritual night were lifted from his soul, and the sweet light of salvation came streaming in. This long-sought experience he himself describes in these words: "The happy period which was to shake off my fetters and afford me a clear discovery of the free mercy of God in Jesus Christ, had now arrived. In the garden where I sat, I had flung my Bible away in utter despair of finding salvation, when something constrained me to open it again. I did so, and singularly enough the first verse I encountered, was the message to my soul of life eternal. Immediately I received strength to believe. I saw the sufficiency of an offered Christ, my pardon in His blood, my acceptance in His righteousness, and unless the Almighty arm had been under me, I should have been overwhelmed with abounding joy." God had caused His light "to shine out of darkness," and the truth of Herbert's couplet in this happy instance, as in many others, is forcibly illustrated:

"A verse may find him when a sermon flies,
And turn delight into a sacrifice."

The converted life became one of deepest consecration; and retiring to the quiet retreat of Olney, where the famous collection of Olney hymns were afterwards written, he gave him-

self up entirely to spiritual exercises. He became a Nonconformist, and threw the weight of his influence into the reformation movement of Wesley and Whitfield. By means of his hymns he became widely known. His longing desire for fellowship with God is the leading feature of many of his compositions. His spirit was unfalteringly onward, and his expression is that of one who looks by faith on the open face of God.

“ Hark, my soul, it is the Lord ;
’Tis thy Saviour, hear His word ;
Jesus speaks, and speaks to thee,
Say, poor sinner, lovest thou Me.”

More familiar still, perhaps, is that ardent prayer, which in some of its expressions, lends us an index to the darker experiences of his Christian life.

“ O for a closer walk with God,
A calm and heavenly frame ;
A light to shine upon the road,
That leads me to the Lamb.”

The spiritual sky of him who has done so much to roll away the darkness from the sky of others was gradually overclouded. Of nervous temperament, and naturally weak constitution, the throne of intellect tottered to almost ruin,

and the closing years of this blissful life went out in shadows. Conscious of the trial which mysteriously awaited him, he sang out his Christ-like resignation in these wonderful words :

“ 'Tis my happiness below,
Not to live without the cross ;
But the Saviour's power to know,
Sanctifying every loss.

“ Trials must and will befall,
But with trembling faith to see
Love inscribed upon them all ;
This is happiness to me.”

Gladdening beams of brightness alternated with the darkness, and in one of such moments he whispered with that calmness which characterizes the trustful life in its stormiest days :

“ Sometimes a light surprises
The Christian as he sings ;
It is the Lord who rises
With healing in His wings.

“ When comforts are declining,
He grants the soul again
A season of clear-shining,
To cheer it after rain.”

Never, never amid the deepest solitudes of his weary life did his faith lose its grip on the merit of Jesus. He sang as he himself realized,

when he wrote these words for that grand, sweet song of the adoring soul :

“ There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins ;
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.”

At three-score and ten he laid down the harp, whose chords had made music for the pilgrims of earth, and rose up to realize the fulness of truth in his own rejoicing prophecy :

“ Then in a nobler, sweeter song,
I'll sing Thy power to save,
When this poor lisping, stammering tongue
Lies silent in the grave.”

Had William Cowper written but one hymn, it would have rendered him immortal. It is the “Hymn of Providence,” which we study to-night, and certain it is, though we cannot unveil the mystery which darkens the experiences of this sainted character, had William Cowper not been afflicted, he could not have written these admirable lines :

“ God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform.”

It comes to us, like the Psalms of David, invested with the sacredness of a real experience,

and the suggesting incident was briefly this: In one of those morbid depressions of spirit to which he was subject, Cowper supposed that the Lord demanded of him, because of his sins, an atoning sacrifice; and laboring under this singular delusion, he engaged a hackman to drive him to the river Ouse, fully determining to end his life. While on his way, an intensely thick mist gathered over the scene, the driver lost his bearings, and, as if guided by the impulse of the Divine Spirit, arrived at the very spot from which they had started two hours before. Cowper regarded the whole circumstance, as indeed it truly was, a merciful interposition of Divine Providence; and completely overcome by a sense of God's protecting care, he lifted his pen and wrote this hymn.

The words find sufficient illustration in the life we have reviewed; but a general study of the dealings of God with men may prove both interesting and instructive.

The book of Providence is not so easily read as the book of nature, and the reason is evident to the enquiring mind—unlike creation it is not a finished work. Take a stranger to a building where an architect is in the midst of his plans, with walls half built, with arches half sprung, and what appears all order to the architect,

whose plan is before him, appears to the stranger simply confusion. And so stands wondering man amid that gigantic scheme of universal providence which God began in this world six thousand years ago, and may not finish for ages to come—

“ Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never-failing skill.”

Turn with me to the page of *history*, and mystery challenges us at every step.

But if we carefully look along the stream of the centuries, we see that evolving events mark God's purpose plain. I see Egypt, Assyria, Greece and Rome, rising in succession into pre-eminence and power. I mark their decline; but not before, in the providence of God, they had prepared a way for the march of Christianity and the marvellous conquests of the Gospel. I see Charles Martel on the bloody field of Tours beat back the tide of Mohammedan invasion, that so, in the providence of God, Europe might be saved from the degrading sway of the Koran and the Crescent. I see bleeding nations arising from the issues of the thirty years' war, with the dominant power of the Papacy broken, and the foundation laid of Germanic Protestantism. I see the Puritans, driven by intolerance from

English homes, to work the miracle of a great nation on this western continent :

“ Guided by hands they did not see,
By voices called, to them unknown ;
Strange opening doors of circumstance,
Small happenings that were never chance ;
God's daily, hourly providence,
Led in His way and not their own.”

I read between the lines of this world's great volume, and everywhere to see, that high above the ruin of thrones and the crash of empires, “ God reigneth.”

“ He plants His footsteps on the sea,
And rides upon the storm.”

So, also, do we find it in the history of the *Church*. The index finger of a directing providence is ever pointing upwards. Abraham was mysteriously called out of Haran, that God might have a separated people to maintain the principles of true religion, and convey to the world this special revelation of truth through the volume of the Book. While Pharaoh was building his treasure cities and filling them with corn, he was unconsciously working his own ruin; and while infant Israel was tottering on the brink of a yawning gulf, the child Moses was born to be her deliverer. The star appeared

over the Eastern plain to lead the way to the manger of Bethlehem, just when the world was led to expect it. The blood of the martyred saints in pagan Rome was "the seed of the Church;" and the imperishable seed of Christian faith was carried and planted wherever the eagles of her imperial sway fluttered in victory. From the ashes of Wyckliffe, of England; Huss, of Bohemia, and Jerome, of Prague, sprang up the phoenix of resurrection life which breathed over the dry bones of European apostacy and made them live—all this in the providence of God, though mystery attended it—and Britain in turn became the receptacle of reformation principles, as well as the great centre of benevolent and missionary effort; so that wherever the flag of the Anglo-Saxon is planted, his religion must follow to the ends of the earth.

"He treasures up His bright designs,
And works His sovereign will."

So, also, do we recognize the providence of God in the changeful events of *individual* lives. There is nothing too great for His sovereignty, and there is nothing too small for His notice, who holds in His hands the helm of the universe and seeth a sparrow fall to the ground. The providence, who stoops to paint each flower and

form each leaf, who throws open the golden gates of day and casts around a weary world the restful mantle of alternate night, will not forget an immortal soul. "My life is but a single thread," said the devout Evans, "but that thread is held in a Father's hand." The very same God who caused a well of water to spring up in the desert for dying Hagar; who let down a ladder with angels of comfort to benighted Jacob; who brought Joseph from the pit and the prison to a place in the palaces of Pharaoh; who delivered Daniel from the mouth of the lions; who saved shipwrecked Paul on the pieces of his vessel, is your God and my God in this church to-night, and the very hairs of your head are numbered by Him."

There is, indeed, much in Providence that is perplexing and unexplained; but can we not trust the assurance He gives, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." An old writer says, "God's biddings are always God's enablings;" and a new writer on Christian ethics adds, "So we may be quite sure the path of obedience is the path of possibility, that all-sufficient grace runs parallel with every commandment of the Lord, whether it be to endure trial or to witness for Christ." It is just this strengthening confidence in the wisdom

of all God's dealings with us, that makes the Christian superior to earthly crosses and earthly conditions. It is the trusting of the pillar, that leads by day and shines out upon the black wall at night with this promise written, "Certainly, I will be with thee," that keeps the pilgrim of to-day facing Zionward. It is Whittier, I think, who has written that beautiful line of trust :

" I know not where His islands lift
Their fronded palms in air ;
I only know I cannot drift
Beyond His love and care."

Of the tapestry weaver it is said : " He works on the wrong side evermore, but works for the right side ever." He does his duty, faithfully keeping the shuttle moving true to the perforated pattern before him ; but he only sees the tangled side of the web until it is taken from the loom ; and all things will come right in the end for those who keep true to the great pattern of a perfect life, and perform the duty lying nearest to them.

" The years of man are nature's loom,
Let down from the place of the sun ;
Wherein we are weaving away,
'Till the mystic web is done.

“ Sometimes blindly, but weaving surely,
Each for himself the fate ;
We may not see how the right side looks,
We must often weave and wait.”

Certain it is, there is mystery in affliction, mystery in creature broken-heartedness, mystery in the pang of earthly separations, mystery in the removal of those most loved and those most useful by the hand of death. But is there not mystery all around us—in the growth of a blade of grass, in the constant march of the blazing sun, in the processes of man's thought? Was there not mystery when the sun was withdrawn and nature revolted at the awful spectacle of a dying Christ on the cross of Calvary? But was there not mystery explained, shadows lifted, darkness fleeing away forever as the sepulchre of Joseph yielded sway to a King, as immortal life went throbbing again along the arteries of a dying world and a voice proclaimed for mankind to hear, “The Lord indeed is risen?” “What once I deemed crosses, misfortunes, and even judgments,” writes the noted Christian, Sir T. Brown, “since now I have inquired farther into their visible effects, appear to me only as the secret and dissembled favors of His affection.”

“ Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His grace ;
Behind a frowning Providence
He hides a smiling face.

The devoted Thierney was one day much perplexed over questions of God's mysterious providence. Involved in a labyrinth of doubt, he accidentally entered a ribbon factory where countless wheels were revolving in intricate movement, but each with its place and its office in the vast machinery. Thierney was informed that all these movements were connected with a centre, in which there was a chest that was always kept locked. Anxious to fully understand the entire principles of the machine, he asked permission to see within, but received this reply, “ The master has the key.” Like the light of a revelation from heaven, it fell upon his soul, and all was clear. “ What need I more ?” he said ; “ the Master has the key.”

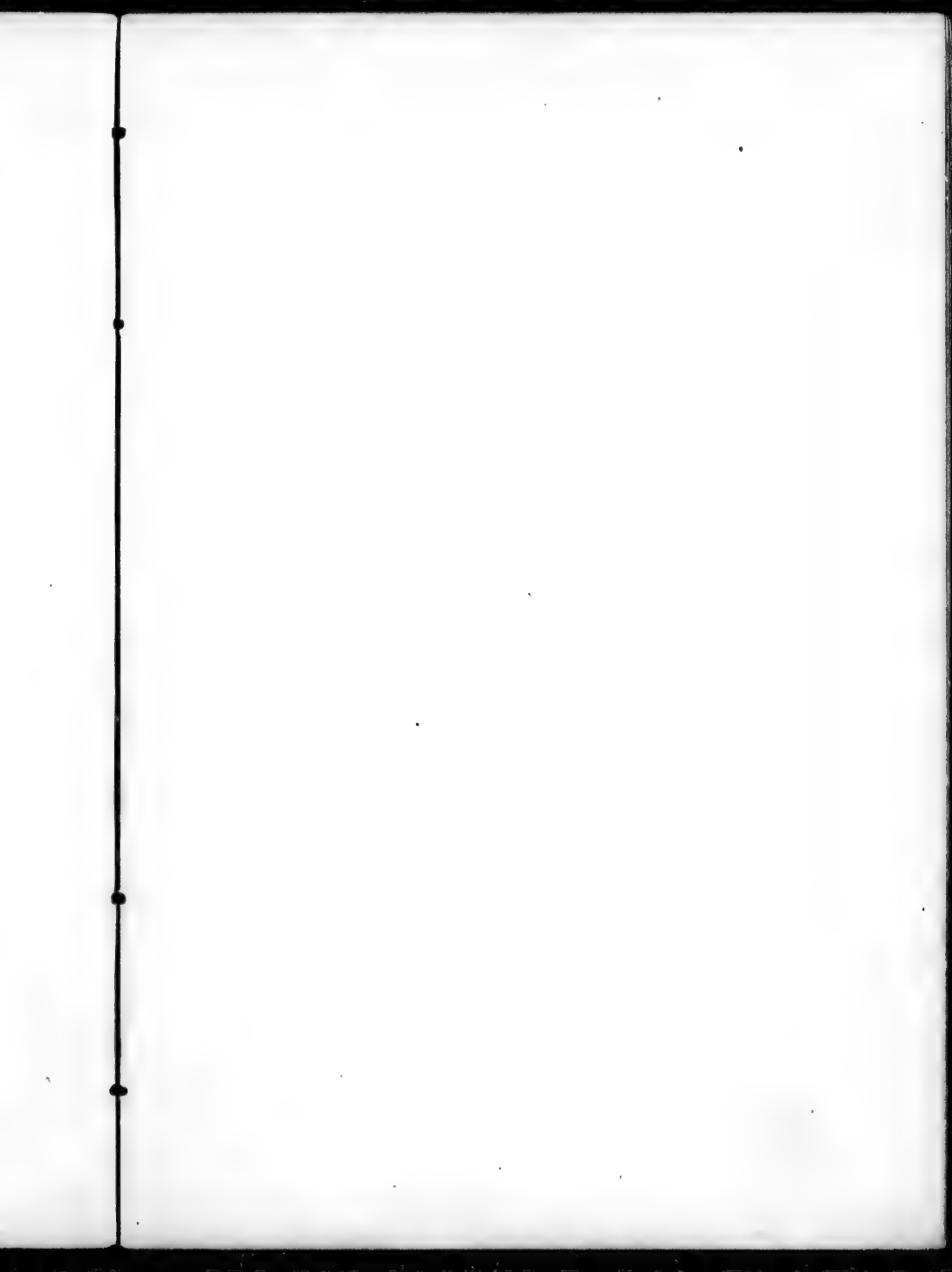
“ His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour ;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower.”

There is mystery in death, but if you and I are living as we ought, we need not fear it. The secret of the Christian's victory lies in this: We

meet our last enemy as an already conquered foe, and not as one who is yet to be conquered. "Keep the life pure and be always ready," is the sententious advice of a good and great man.

Sir Colin Campbell being appointed to the command of the army in India, he was asked by the Government when he could be ready to start. He sent a despatch in reply that surprised the world, "I am ready to-night." Brothers immortal, there is a warfare lying just before us, and it "knows no discharge." Each mortal creature is appointed to it by the decree of heaven. It is the warfare of death. And should God's angel come here with His summons to go forth, can we say with Campbell, "I am ready to-night—can we?"

The eternal future is clear in Christ. Keeping close to Him we shall reach that land where mystery is ended, where the problems of life reach explanation, where sorrow never enters, where death never comes.



*I once was a stranger to grace and to God,
I knew not my danger, and felt not my load;
Though friends spoke in rapture of Christ on the tree,
"Jehovah Tsidkenu;" 'twas nothing to me.*

*Like tears from the daughters of Zion that roll,
I wept when the waters went over His soul;
Yet thought not that my sins had nailed to the tree,
"Jehovah Tsidkenu;" 'twas nothing to me.*

*When free grace awoke me, by light from on high,
Then legal fears shook me, I trembled to die;
No refuge, no safety in self could I see—
"Jehovah Tsidkenu" my Saviour must be.*

*My terrors all vanished before the sweet name;
My guilty fears banished, with boldness I came
To drink at the fountain, life-giving and free;
"Jehovah Tsidkenu" is all things to me.*

*Even treading the valley, the shadow of death,
This watchword shall rally my faltering breath;
For if from life's fever my God set me free,
"Jehovah Tsidkenu" my death-song shall be.*

*Jehovah Tsidkenu! my treasure and boast,
Jehovah Tsidkenu! I ne'er can be lost;
In Thee I shall conquer by flood and by field,
My cable, my anchor, my breastplate and shield!*

GOD IN REDEMPTION.

"For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin ; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."—2 Cor. v. 21.

"Jehovah Tsidkenu, was nothing to me."

"Jehovah Tsidkenu, my Saviour must be."

"Jehovah Tsidkenu, is all things to me."

Within the compass of this single hymn we discover the extremes of spiritual experience ; we mark the passage of a soul from sin to salvation, from self to God, from grace to glory. All through the ages, from righteous Abel to the latest saint who has swept through the opened gate of heaven, this miracle of life has been working. The theatre of its operations is here on earth, but its end is in heaven. The exercise of faith that finds mercy is here, but its grandest realizations are hereafter. The stream of communion which we bathe in to-night must deepen and widen as it nears the ocean. Companionship with Jesus in the life that is, is only a pre-

paratory step to the bearing of His likeness, when "we shall see Him as He is," in the life that is to come.

So, for the child of God the maturity of life is not to be estimated by length of days, but rather by the character of faith and the degree of holiness which that life attains.

" 'Tis not the number of the lines
On life's fast filling page ;
'Tis not the pulses added throb,
Which constitute their age.

" Some souls are serfs among the free,
While others nobly thrive ;
They stand even where their fathers stood,
Dead, even while they live.

" Others, all spirit, heart and sense ;
Theirs the mysterious power,
To live in thrills of joy or woe,
A twelve-month in an hour."

And if a shining life climb quickly up the sky to reach its zenith soon, it is all of grace. We trace the potter's hand in moulded clay, and when we lift a human life before the human gaze, we magnify the name of Him who makes all life sublime. All merit—Christ's; all glory—His; and, out from the ranks of the redeemed in heaven, no voice is lifted in a richer ascription

of praise than the voice of him who placed the words of this hymn on our lips, and exemplified its meaning in his remarkable life.

Robert Murray McCheyne was born in the city of Edinburgh, in the year 1813. He was the youngest son in the family, and early in life gave evidence of a deeply sympathetic nature, as well of intellectual endowments of high order. At the age of five, he studied as a choice recreation the Greek alphabet. At the age of nine he entered the high school, and by honest application to his work maintained high excellence in all his classes. When only thirteen he carried off high honors in poetic composition. His university course was completed at the age of eighteen, and was particularly distinguished by the position he held as a student of Moral Philosophy. He was also adjudged the prize for a striking poem on the Covenanters; the presentation being made by Professor Wilson, familiarly known as "Christopher North."

His mental faculties were fast developing, and according to the design of his parents, he looked forward to the study of Theology. But so far no evidence was given that the light of salvation had fallen on his soul. He made no pretensions to a religious life, only in so far as a strict conformity to the ordinary habits of worship were

concerned. He afterwards said of this period of his life, "I cherished a pure morality, but lived the Pharisee at heart." The natural vivacity of McCheyne, which fitted him so admirably for public life, only needed to be touched and chastened in order to make him a mighty instrument in the hands of God for the salvation of others; and the chastening was sent. An elder brother, whose character is described as "reflecting the light of divine grace with sure and solemn loveliness," was deeply attached to Robert, as indeed Robert was to him. He earnestly prayed that Robert might be savingly influenced by the truth while yet he lived; and his prayer was answered. The voice of peace was spoken from a cloud: for standing soon after at the bedside of that brother, in whose countenance the light of reflected glory was already beaming, and from whose lips the "Thy will be done" of Jesus was resignedly spoken, young McCheyne learned the worth and reality of religion when most it is needed, and that very morning found refuge at the cross.

A twelvemonth later finds these words of confession written in his diary: "On this morning last year came the first overwhelming blow to my worldliness, how blessed to me, Thou O

God only knowest, who has made it so." His course for the ministry commenced in his nineteenth year, and subjected to the temptation of being popular in society, he humbly records the struggles he was called to endure in striving for the mastery over self and worldliness. In one place he writes: "There is not one trait in my life to-day that is worth remembering, and yet these twenty-four hours are to be accounted for." In another place we find him recording, after having read the life of Henry Martyn, "Would that I could imitate him; giving up all for the love of Christ. And yet what hinders? Lord purify my life and help me to be wholly Thine."

God heard his prayer, and opened the way. With several of his class-mates he engaged in the work of preaching the Gospel to the poor of the city, and with this practical training in the study of men, he was privileged to sit in the halls of learning at the feet of such teachers as Welsh and Chalmers. The youth was becoming a man. He realized himself standing on the threshold of public ministry, and his purpose became elevated. "Oh that Christ would count me faithful," he writes, "that a dispensation of the Gospel might be committed to me." About this time he composed that hymn, which gives

evidence of the deepening experiences of a man who is spiritually-minded above his fellows :

“ When this passing world is done,
When has set yon glaring sun,
When I stand with Christ in glory,
Looking o'er life's finished story ;
Then, Lord, shall I fully know—
Not till then—how much I owe.”

“ Oh blessed fact,” he writes, “ the wealth of worlds would not make up for that saying, were it lost ! ”—“ If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” On the evening of the day when his college life was ended, he wrote in his diary : “ My last appearance here ; life itself is vanishing fast ; what thou doest, do quickly.”

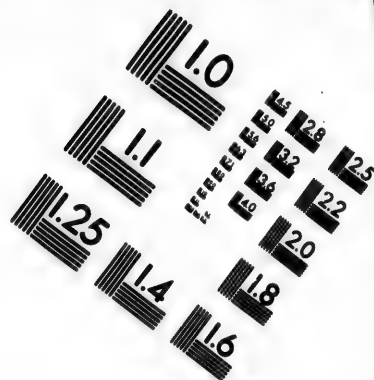
Licensed at the age of twenty-two, at Annan, in Dumfriesshire, the same age as that at which Toplady commenced his ministry, he was soon after called to Larbert, as assistant minister to Andrew Bruce. His gifts were immediately recognized, much good was accomplished by his earnest ministry, and soon after he was called to St. Mary's, Dundee. He was a bold and forcible preacher, openly denouncing what he considered evil, but withal there was a tone of tender affection in every sentence he uttered. He always

spoke from the pulpit in the spirit of one who was weighed down with the vastness of the responsibility resting upon him. His motto was this: "Enlarge my heart, Lord, and I shall preach;" and on the back of the manuscripts upon which his sermons were written such expressions as these were found: "Master, help." "Send showers of blessing." "Give the Spirit and take the glory."

His efforts at Dundee were richly successful in the winning of souls. His labors were incessant, for he found the city "given over to idolatry." His only recreation was found in change of employment, from studying to visiting; and this continued strain soon told disastrously on his naturally weak constitution. He was forced to leave Dundee two years after his settlement, without, however, resigning his charge, and it was during this time that he visited Palestine on a mission of enquiry to the Jews, in company with Dr. Andrew Bonar and Dr. Somerville. His health was greatly restored by the journey, and he returned to Scotland in about a year, to find that during his absence a glorious revival was granted to his parish, under the earnest ministrations of the Rev. W. C. Burns, who afterwards became a missionary to China.

McCheyne was lovingly welcomed by his peo-





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ple, and among his first words to them were these: "If the Lord be pleased to give me a crown from among you, I do promise here in His sight, that I will cast it at His feet, saying, 'Worthy is the Lamb that is slain to receive the dominion, and the honor, and the glory;' your heaven would be two heavens for me." The revival spirit spread from Dundee, and McCheyne was everywhere engaged. For some time he preached more abroad than at home, and always with saving effect. Often exhausted, he was heard to say, "A soldier of the cross must needs endure hardness." He loved the pulpit, and always esteemed it a privilege to preach. He justified his busy life by saying: "The oil of the lamp in the temple burned away in giving light, and so ought we."

Such peculiar sanctity seemed to attach to his person, that those who heard him preach felt as though they were lifted into the immediate presence of God. It is also related that the savor of his holiness seemed to abide in the homes where he visited for months after his departure. He was wont to say, "There are difficulties, I know, in the way, but I am on the Intercessor's breast-plate; if I could hear Christ praying for me in the next room, I would not

fear a million foes ; yet, distance makes no difference, He is praying for me."

He was an active member of the Convocation, just then engaged in behalf of the Free protesting Church as against the Establishment, and being an uncompromising foe of "Patronage," he made many enemies. But he perseveringly worked with others, endeavoring to reform the abuses which were hindering the progress of true religion in his native land. And, like William Wilberforce, who spent forty years of his life in advocating the abolition of slavery, and died the year before his life-long efforts were crowned with success, this man, whose moving spirit did so much to stir up the popular feeling against the domination of civic authorities in spiritual things, passed away to rest on the eve of victory.

He fell in the breach, with his hand on his sword doing battle for God. His last sermon was preached at Broughty Ferry, from the first verse of the 60th chapter of Isaiah: "Arise, shine ; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." Soon after, while visiting a fever-stricken district of the city, he caught the infection, which easily gained way on his over-wrought frame. When made aware of his danger, he calmly replied: "Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not

receive evil ? My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord." Again and again he repeated the text : " Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable. . . ." His heart was with his people to the last. Continually engaged in prayer, he was heard to say : " This parish, Lord ; this people, this whole place ; do it Thyself, Lord, for thy weak servant." To his sister, who waited by his bedside, he repeated the words of Cowper's hymn :

" Sometimes a light surprises
The Christian while he sings ;
It is the Lord who rises,
With healing in His wings.
Set free from present sorrow,
We cheerfully can say ;
Even let the unknown to-morrow
Bring with it what it may."

And soon after, while in the act of raising his hands as if pronouncing the benediction, the spirit of the holy McCheyne soared away from the ennobling service, to the beatific presence of the Master he so faithfully followed. His work was ended when the majority of lives are but begun. One of his favorite maxims was this : " So live among men that you may be missed when you are gone ;" and the sanctified life, that

spent its short hour in the grandest work which can engage the energies of man, will live on in the memory of the people of God until time shall be no more. Like the lives he studied, under Christ, as models of earnest and whole-souled devotion, the story of his life was cut short. Patrick Hamilton was cut off at twenty-four; John Janeway at twenty-three; David Brainard at thirty; Henry Martyn at thirty-two, and Robert McCheyne at twenty-nine. The best of their lives were given to God and His people. Young manhood's energy was over-spent, but well-spent. They walked along the sun-lit heights of exalted fellowship so near to heaven, while yet on earth, that God put out His hand and took them into uninterrupted communions in His presence forever. Two lives they live—the "far better" life of the "rest that remaineth" is one; the other is that immortality of influence which is patent to some men before their work is done, and which lives on and speaks for generations upon generations after their voices are hushed and their hands are still.

The spirit of McCheyne is most beautifully revealed in the hymns he composed from time to time; but in none of them more expressly,

than in the hymn we have chosen for the study of to-night :

" I once was a stranger to grace and to God,
I knew not my danger, and felt not my load."

And if the poet sought in these lines to express his own experience, he accurately described the experience of others—the experience of the majority of us, before Jesus Christ became to our souls the true "Tsidenku," the Lord our Righteousness.

A Christian engraver in the City of New York has recorded in his experience, that the great saving impression was made upon his soul while he was engaged in preparing a print of that famous picture, "The Only Son." It represents a lad with a bundle on his back wandering in self-will from the house of his father; and as the engraver worked on the print, the Spirit of God whispered in his soul, "Wandering, and where to?" That was enough. An immortal soul with his back turned to God, deaf to the call of redeeming mercy, stumbling on in the dark—and where to?

In McCheyne's confession there are three things implied: ignorance, insensibility, indifference; and one or all of these is wrought into the

fibre of every sin that keeps the soul away from the Saviour.

" I once was a stranger to grace and to God,
I *knew not* my danger, and *felt not* my load ;
Though friends spoke in rapture of Christ on the tree,
Jehovah Tsidkenu, *was nothing to me.*"

One of the most infamous inventions of the cruel Inquisition in Spain, whereby thousands of Protestants were put to death, was the " Virgin's Kiss." The steadfast martyr, who chose to die rather than renounce the principles of his religion, was rudely pushed forward in mock worship to kiss the image of the Virgin, when the arms of the image, controlled by a secret spring, clasped him in deadly embrace, and pierced his body with hidden daggers. And there is many a soul who, persuaded by the deception of sin, goes forward to the worship of godless pleasure, to the worship of perishing profits, to the worship of a sinful self, to the worship of everything else but God, all unthinking that within the silentless embrace of that which he worships, there are daggers concealed to destroy the soul. Let us be assured of this, just here, that wilful ignorance is wilful wrong; that bolstered insensibility is only the madman kissing his fetters, and that thoughtless indiffer-

ence is, in the majority of cases of those who are lost, the damning sin.

“ Like tears from the daughters of Zion that roll,
I wept when the waters went over His soul ;
Yet thought not that *my* sins had nailed to the tree,
Jehovah Tsidkenu, 'twas nothing to me.”

There is a sort of religion, or profession of religion, that actually counts for nothing in view of eternity.

There are many persons who are found to weep over the sufferings of Jesus on the cross, who would have lifted, were they there, the crown of thorns from His bleeding head, who would angrily have driven back the low-browed mob of mocking crucifiers from His presence, and yet who have never wept over a personal sin. This is no religion ! We are not to confuse mere sentimentalism with a saving experience.

There may be belief in, or admiration for, a historical person called Jesus, who was born in Bethlehem, who lived a blameless life, and died at last on Calvary ; just as men have belief in, and admiration for, Howard, the philanthropist ; Gordon, the patriot, or Moffatt, the missionary ; but this is altogether a different thing from the faith that realizes in Jesus a Saviour from sin. It comes very far short of the great confession

written down by the apostle for the believing soul, "He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." It knows nothing of the conviction that wrings from the heart of every true child of God this contrite confession: "Mine are the hands that formed that cross, and mine are the lips that repeated loud amens to that Saviour's suffering." A religion of mere admiration for Christ may be an easy kind of religion, but it is neither a safe, satisfactory, nor scriptural one. The religion that saves and satisfies is intensely personal and intensely practical. It does not merely admire the life-boat of salvation which stands alongside the old foundering ship of sin—it enters into it, and finds life by means of it.

When a man looks at a rope upon which a miner is about to be lowered into a mine, he may say of it, "I believe that rope is well-formed and reliable." But when the miner lays hold upon it, and swings away down into the tremendous chasm, that means more than the passing of a mere opinion. He lets go of everything else when he lays hold upon it. His safety and life depend upon its strength. He *trusts* it. And I tell you, friends, when an immortal soul, dangling over the gulf of an endless eternity,

realizes his danger, lets go of every other refuge in the wide universe, and depends upon the merit of an atoning Christ for salvation, it is not a matter of mere opinion with him. It is a matter of personal experience, of personal dependence, of personal trust. The evidence of our being saved, lies not half as much in what we think about Jesus, as in what we *do* with Jesus. A single weary, wishful soul, meeting with and accepting the only and all-sufficient Saviour, means life eternal. Thus did McCheyne realize it, and hence the expression of his greatest verse :

“ When free grace awoke me, with light from on high,
Then legal fears shook me, I trembled to die ;
No refuge, no safety in self could I see—
Jehovah Tsidkenu, my Saviour *must* be ! ”

There is an awakening from the slumber of death. There is an earnest crying, “ What must I do to be saved ? ” for the soul, no longer insensible to its need, can no longer be indifferent. There is the law to condemn, there is conscience to accuse, and there is an eternal future to be faced. No wonder that an awakened sinner is an alarmed sinner, “ Then legal fears shook me, I trembled to die.” But, blessed be God, there is grace to save ! As Mr. Moody quaintly puts it :

"The law shows you that you are not straight; grace straightens you." "Oh, the blood, the redeeming blood of Christ! It satisfies the mind with truth; it satisfies the heart with affection; it satisfies the conscience with peace; it satisfies the soul with heaven."

An awakened sinner enquired of a well-known evangelist, at the close of one of his meetings, the way of life. The evangelist hurriedly replied, "I cannot talk with you to-night, but when you go home, take your Bible and turn to Isaiah, 53rd chap., 6th verse; go in at one 'all' and come out at the other." The enquirer did as he was directed and read, "All we like sheep have gone astray: we have turned every one to his own way." "That finds me," said the man to himself, "I go in at that door; I am one of the 'all.'" Then he finished the verse, "and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all," and quickly added, as the light of truth fell upon his soul, "and I go out at that door." That very night he had part in the blessedness of those "Whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered," for Jesus' sake. He could look by faith to Him, who on the cross of Calvary stood surety, bondsman, substitute for sinners. He could say:



" Upon a life I have not lived,
Upon a death I did not die ;
Another's life, another's death,
I stake my whole eternity."

The whole heart finds God, when the whole heart seeks Him, and when he is found in Christ—found in the fulness of His grace, in the magnitude of His mercy, in the largeness of His love—the force and beauty of McCheyne's favorite expression, "Christ's righteousness is broader than the sin-wound," is readily perceived. "Oh, for the spirit," says Phillip Brooks, "that is content with nothing less than the highest help. To turn in temptation directly to the power of God, to cry out in sorrow for God's company, to be satisfied in doubt with nothing short of divine assurances, to know that there is no real escape from sin other than being made holy in God's holiness ! These are what makes a man's complete salvation."

"Jehovah Tsidkenu, my Saviour must be."

A converted Chinaman thus quaintly tells the story of his conversion : "I was lying in a deep, dark pit, with no hope of rescue, and ready to die. Confucius came by, and looking in, said : 'If you ever get out, be careful not to get in again.' Next a Buddhist priest came by, looked

in, and said: 'Poor fellow I am very much pained to see you there; if you only come up part of the way, I might reach and help you.' At last there came one called Jesus, and His face was bright with kindness. He came right down into the pit where I lay helpless, lifted me clear out of it, washed away my uncleanness, clothed me in white raiment, and said, 'Go, and sin no more.' "

" My terrors all vanished before that sweet name ;
My guilty fears banished, with boldness I came
To drink at the fountain, life-giving and free,—
Jehovah Tsidkenu, is *all things* to me."

It is no longer the sinful Magdalene lying in tears at the feet of Jesus, and begging for forgiveness; but Magdalene going forth in peace at the bidding of her Master, and ready in the greatness of her gratitude, to follow Him to death. It is Saul, the persecutor, changed in one supreme moment into Paul, the preacher, done with trusting in the flesh, and counting "all things loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus." It is the infinite outreaching of the human soul, forever satisfied with a peace "which passeth all understanding," with a love "which passeth knowledge," with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

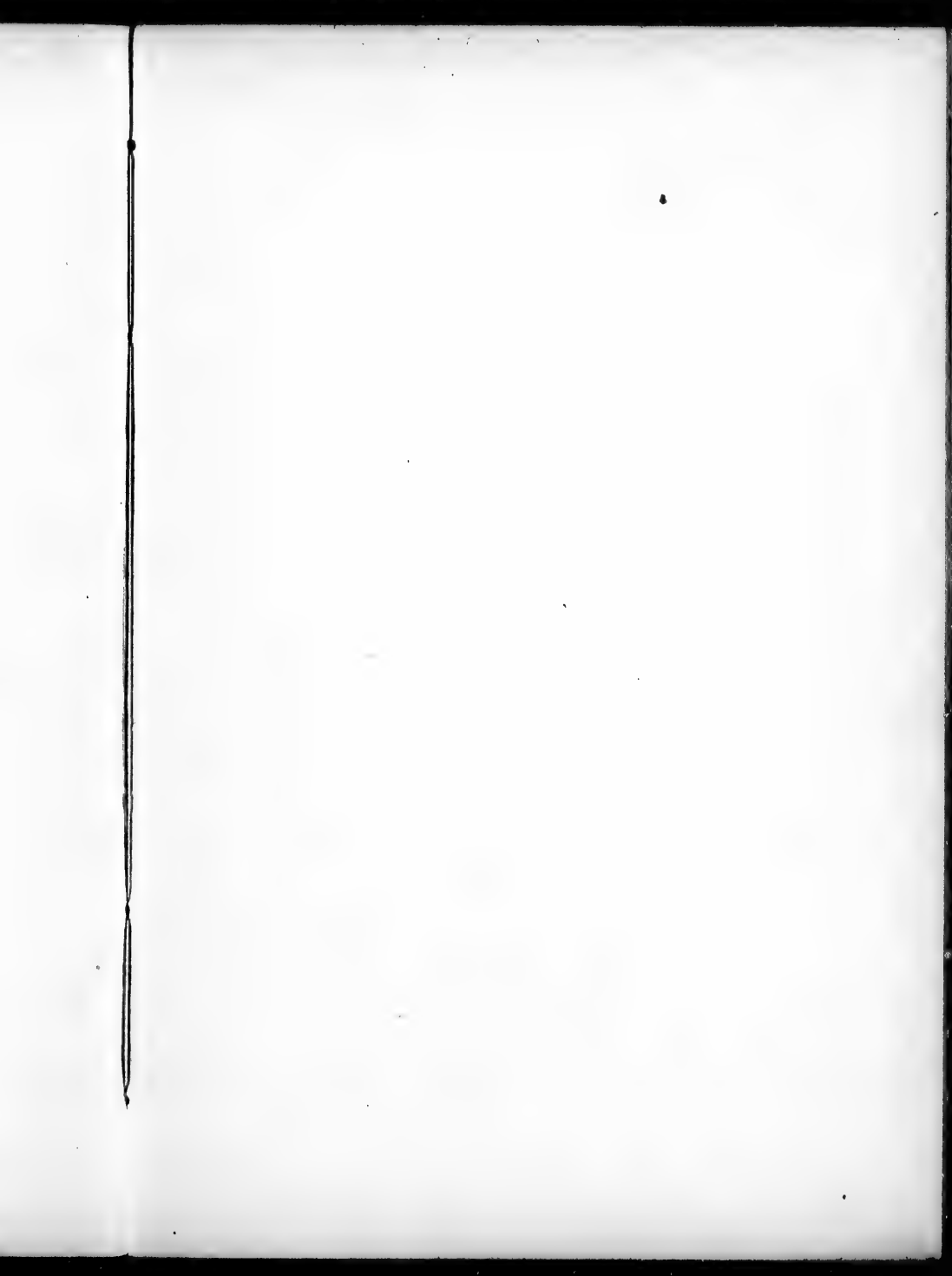
"Jehovah Tsidkenu, is all things to me."

Oh people, more of Christ is what we want.
More of Christ would make the sad home bright,
the wavering soul steadfast, the breaking heart
happy, the selfish nature generous, and the bur-
dened conscience free. Jesus my Prophet, Jesus
my Priest, Jesus my King! "Name which is
above every name"—the Lord our Righteous-
ness! To Him let every knee be bowed. Crown
Him, ye people, "Lord of all."

"Ever treading the valley and shadow of death,
This watchword shall rally my faltering breath ;
For if from life's fever my God sets me free,—
Jehovah Tsidkenu, my death-song shall be."

The old reformers had this watchword, "The
Lord our Righteousness," emblazoned on their ban-
ners as they went forth to battle in the redeem-
ing cause. John Lambert could cry out amid
the flames of Smithfield: "None but Christ,
none but Christ!" and Robert Murray McCheyne,
as the prison doors of his mortal body were flung
wide open to release the grand, aspiring spirit,
could rejoicingly say: "My soul is escaped as a
bird out of the snare of the fowler: the snare is
broken, and I am escaped."

"So he took the one grand step,
Beyond the stars of God,
Into the splendor, shadowless and broad,—
Into the everlasting joy and light.—
The zenith of his earthly life had come."



*O happy day that fixed my choice
On Thee, my Saviour and my God !
Well may this glowing heart rejoice,
And tell its raptures all abroad.*

*'Tis done ; the great transaction's done ;
I am my Lord's and He is mine ;
He drew me, and I followed on,
Charmed to confess the voice divine.*

*Now rest, my long-divided heart ;
Fixed on this bl'ssful centre, rest ;
With ashes who would grudge to part,
When called on angel's bread to feast.*

*High heaven, that heard the solemn vow,
That vow renewed shall often hear ;
Till in life's latest hour I bow,
And bless in death a bond so dear.*

PREVAILING GRACE.

"By the grace of God I am what I am."—I CORINTHIANS XV. 10.

"He drew me, and I followed on,
Charmed to confess the voice divine."

PHILIP DODDRIDGE, the writer of this familiar hymn, was born in London, June 26th, 1702. He was pastor of the Congregational Church at Northampton, and Principal of the Theological Academy there.

He was a youth of pious disposition, and at the age of eighteen commenced his studies for the Episcopal ministry under the patronage of Dr. Clarke, of St. Albans. We judge of the character of the student from the following reply to a friend of his, who had condoled with him in a letter, on having been "buried alive" at Kilsworth: "Here I stick close to these delightful studies which a favoring providence has made the business of my life. I live like a tortoise shut up in its shell; yet I live like a

prince—not, indeed, in the pomp of greatness, but the pride of liberty; master of my books, master of my time, and, I hope I may add, master of myself. I can willingly give up the charms of London, the luxury, the society, the popularity of it, for the secret pleasure of rational employment and self-approbation. So that instead of lamenting it as my misfortune, you should congratulate me upon it as my peculiar happiness.”

The rich promises of youth were more than fulfilled; and the firm determination of the student to excel in the great work to which he had consecrated his talents appeared in the man of deep and abiding faith, who afterwards wrote that book which has remained popular through a century and a half: “The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul.”

The famous epigram of Doddridge was made upon his family motto: “While we live, let us live,” and stands thus in his works:

“Live while you live, the epicure will say,
And take the pleasure of the passing day;
Live while you live, the sacred preacher cries,
And give to God each moment as it flies;
Lord, in my views let both united be,
I live to pleasure, when I live to Thee.”

In keeping with this lofty sentiment, we find him writing to his wife from Northampton, in 1742, the following words: "My days begin, pass, and end in pleasure, and seem short because they are so delightful; and the reason, the great and sufficient reason is, that I have more of the presence of God with me than I remember ever to have before enjoyed. He enables me to live for Him and live with Him. It is pleasant to read; pleasant to compose; pleasant to converse with my friends; pleasant to write letters of necessary business by which any good can be done; pleasant to go out and preach the Gospel to poor souls, some of whom are thirsty for it, and others dying without it; pleasant on the week-day to think how near another Sabbath is; but, Oh, how much more pleasant to think how near eternity is, and how short the journey through the wilderness, and that it is but a step from earth to heaven!"

His habits of devotion were fixed and regular. It was his custom to awake at five o'clock in the morning, and repeat the stanzas of his own hymn, "Awake, my soul, to meet the day." When he reached the sixth stanza, he rose from his bed to prayer and duty.

He was a friend and favorite of the great and good Lady Huntingdon, and among those with

whom he associated at Donnington Park—the residence of the Earl—were the godly Romaine; Toplady, the writer of “Rock of Ages;” De Coursey, the Christian philosopher; Rowland Hill, the famous preacher; the sainted James Hervey; and Watts, the voluminous hymn-writer. Here pre-eminent graces shone side by side with remarkable gifts. Here, indeed, was an armory in which soldiers of Christ polished their weapons for spiritual warfare. “Iron sharpeneth iron;” and in this place of communion the life of Philip Doddridge was purified, strengthened and fitted for doing a lasting work of good.”

He was recognized in his day as a preacher of wonderful fervor and earnestness; but it is as a hymn-writer that he is most widely and popularly known. His compositions on spiritual subjects number three hundred and seventy-four; and he himself classified them in his works according to the books of the Bible, from which the themes are taken. His hymns “attain great heights of devotion, and are so excellent in phraseology as to be deemed indispensable to every collection of sacred verse.”

“My God, and is Thy table spread,” from his pen, is conceded to be the most beautiful of sacramental hymns, and is used by almost all Chris-

tian denominations in connection with the great feast of Eucharistic remembrance. We learn from the life of Frances Ridley Havergal, that early and lasting impressions were made upon her heart by the words of this hymn being sung in her father's church, just preparatory to partaking of the Holy Communion. And if its influence had but blessed this one life, through this gifted and sainted woman it has blessed millions.

Equally famous is that hymn of Doddridge's which afterwards found its way into the Scotch paraphrases, "O God of Bethel." It was originally written to follow a sermon of its author's, on "Jacob's vow ;" and has since proved a comfort to many a home and heart, in times of special devotion and trying affliction. A pathetic interest attaches to these verses from their association with the story of the heroic missionary David Livingston. It was fixed in his memory in early youth by the careful training of his Scottish home, and it remained the favorite hymn of his weary marches through the unexplored wilds of Africa, as he sought to emancipate her benighted races from the gyves of slavery and sin. These very words set to a familiar tune were sung on the 18th of April, 1874, as his remains were interred in Westmins-

ter Abbey, and a nation did honor to one of the noblest of her sons.

"Grace, 'tis a charming sound," and "O, happy day that fixed my choice," are hymns of every devotional heart, and are sung wherever the name and religion of Christ are known and loved. The latter is especially associated with times of ingathering to the ranks of the Church, and no verse is a more appropriate expression of the devoutly confessing soul than this:

" 'Tis done, the great transaction's done,
I am my Lord's, and He is mine;
He drew me and I followed on,
Charmed to confess the voice divine."

Doddridge lived to exemplify by consistent Christian life the sanctifying influence of that grace which he delighted to magnify; and, at the age of fifty, died triumphant in the knowledge that abounding grace is for the pilgrim of earth the first stage of eternal glory. One day while conversing with his pupils at Northampton, on the various ways in which Christians meet death, he said: "I wish that my last words may be the lines of Watts:

" A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On Thy kind arm I fall."

He died at Lisbon, in the autumn of 1751, a victim of consumption, cared for to the last by the kindness of his fast friend and sister in Christ, Lady Huntingdon; and it is testified by those who knew him best, that of his life and its solemn close, the last verse of his hymn was strikingly true :

“ High heaven that heard the solemn vow,
That vow renewed shall daily hear ;
Till in life's latest hour I bow,
And bless, in death, a bond so dear.”

The word grace, in its spiritual use, has been variously defined. Some have spoken of it as a sort of general good—a smile of kindness on the face of God—a sending of His rain in mindful providence upon the good and the evil, upon the just and the unjust; but the grace of which the Apostle speaks in the text, means more than this. It is “the grace of God that bringeth salvation.” It is free favor for the undeserving. It is as some one has aptly defined it: “God’s goodwill toward us in Christ while yet we are sinners, and God’s good works for us by His Spirit when once we are saved.” It is merciful in its provisions, “For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye

through His poverty might be rich. " It is sovereign in its operations, "for by grace are ye saved through faith ; and that not of yourselves ; it is the gift of God ;" and yet this gift is clearly conditional, "By grace are ye saved through faith." It is in the plainest terms, free favor accepted by the undeserving that results in personal salvation ; so that the great proclamation of grace is this : "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

There is a grace that *saves*. In the figures of the Gospel it sought the lost sheep, it welcomed the lost son, and in one supreme moment it changed the career of him who made this confession, "By the grace of God I am what I am." There is grace that *keeps* us saved. It is a principle of new life transmitted to the believing soul, from the essential life-force of God Himself, through "our Lord Jesus Christ." It is God working within the heart surrendered to His services, "both to will and to do of His good pleasure," sustaining in weakness, comforting in sorrow, shielding in times of temptation, and ultimately saving in the hour of death.

So that Paul could write this text over every experience of his wonderful life. He could say, as he thought of that marvellous *theophany* on his way to Damascus, "I am crucified with

Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." He could say, as he journeyed over land and sea to herald the message of life to his perishing fellow-men, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." He could say, as when he was sorely tried by a thorn in the flesh, he heard from heaven the re-assuring words, "My grace is sufficient for thee." "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong." Strange things to take pleasure in! But a man can be wonderfully strong when he has the Almighty God for his ally, and acts from the right motives—"for Christ's sake."

"I live in pleasure when I live to Thee."

The constant thought of Paul's remarkable confession seems to be this: *humble and entire dependence on the grace of God is the truest attitude of the Christian life.*

In other uses than spiritual we have learned the meaning of that word dependence. Of all God's creatures perhaps the least independent is man. Regard him merely as mortal, and what has he got that was not given him? Dependent

in the helplessness of childhood, dependent in the decrepitude of old age, there is only an hour in life when he walks alone—even then he is far from being independent. If God should close that gracious hand that is always opening “to satisfy the desire of every living thing”—if He should remove His reservoir from the skies, and withhold the rains for a single season, what about the husbandman and what about the millions who look to Him for bread? “Collect a synod of scientists! Convoke a conclave of princes! Call together the parliament of nations!” Bid capitalists come with their accumulated millions! And when the sky is like brass above their heads, and the earth like iron beneath their feet, what can they all do? Poor, helpless children of the devil, what but this—to dust return!

And what is this to immortal need? Just in degree what this perishing body is to the imperishable soul, who for a while is tabernacled in it. There is dependence which has reference to an earthly supply, and there is dependence which has reference to the issues of eternity. “Man cannot live by bread alone.” The Lord knew this when he linked together the temporal and the spiritual in two petitions of His wonderful prayer: Give us graciously this day’s food,

mercifully forgive us every day's sin. And is not this "give" our perpetual cry—the cry of the body, the behest of the soul." As the shellfish clings to its native rock so firmly that the mightiest swell of the Atlantic cannot detach it, because the web-foot with which it clings contains a vacuum, an emptiness, so it is spiritual want—self-emptiness—that keeps us clinging to divine support, and earnestly pleading for divine satisfactions. And as God gives light for the eye that sees, harmonies for the ear that hears, science for the investigating intellect, landscape for the vivid imagination, and objects for the heart that loves, so to that outgoing trust that lifts us above ourselves in strange discontent with everything earthly, God comes down, and gives, and gives, and gives; gives what we most need—gives Christ, and with Him all else—gives grace! "Thanks be unto God for the unspeakable gift."

First. There must be on the part of a seeking sinner absolute dependence on the grace that saves in order to salvation.

"By the grace of God I am what I am," is the grateful language of every soul who rests in the consciousness of sins forgiven. As the blind man said to his inquiring friends who wondered at his cure: "A man that is called Jesus made

clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam and wash : and I went and washed, and I received sight ;" so every man and woman who is saved to-night, has felt the thrill of the Saviour's touch on the sin-sealed eyelids of the soul, and has washed at His bidding in the virtuous "Siloam" of His cleansing blood.

There is no other way but His way. The priceless boon of life and salvation is found alone at the lifted cross. The scholarly Seldon, after a Nicodemus-like experience, makes this confession : "I have tried learning, I have tried society, I have tried scepticism, I have tried seclusion, and now I am shut into a single verse of that strange old Book : 'This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners ; of whom I am chief.' "

"By the grace of God I am what I am," said John Bunyan, as his soul marched forth from his poor imprisoned body, rejoicing in the liberty of a personal salvation ; "unsearchable riches of grace to have reached down to me, the outcast tinker of Bedford—grace indeed to make angels wonder, to make sinners rejoice, to make devils tremble."

"By the grace of God I am what I am," said

John Newton, whose conversion from a career of recklessness and sin to God, and His service, was a veritable miracle of mercy. One morning at his usual devotions, as he sat with his Bible opened at this verse, he was heard to soliloquize : " I am not what I once was, an enemy to God ; I am not what I ought to be, my life is imperfect and my efforts weak ; I am not what I wish to be, for ' when I would do good evil is present with me ' ; I am not what I hope to be, for soon this mortal shall put on immortality ; but ' by the grace of God I am what I am. ' "

" Jesus of Bethlehem, humbled and low !
Wondering shepherd-kings, why was it so ?
Jesus of Nazareth, wearied and worn !
Tell me, disciples, what burdens were borne ?
Christ in Gethsemane, pleading in prayer !
Ministering angels, why pleads He there ?
Christ upon Calvary ! what to atone
Treading that winepress of suffering alone ?
All was in love, sinner, all was for thee ;
See, how thy healing meant sore stripes for Me. "

And in this we find a saved soul's wonder at the marvels of grace, and a Saviour's reply.

Second. Absolute dependence on this grace saves, and life-long dependence on this grace is needed to sustain the soul in its Christward growth.

When the Saviour is speaking, in the 15th chapter of John, of the believer's relation to Himself, He strongly emphasizes this thought of dependence: "I am the vine, ye are the branches; he that *abideth* in Me the same bringeth forth much fruit, for without Me ye can do nothing." That is not very flattering to human self confidence and self-conceit; but in every day's march in this pilgrim life we learn its truth. There is not a grace that adorns the soul, which we have not received by "abiding" in the Vine. The love that lives within our hearts, the faith we exercise from day to day, the hope that lifts us above the earth, the patience that enables us to bear our crosses, and makes us superior to all trials, the courage that enables us to fight life's battles, have all been nurtured in the school of Christ—are all fruits that have flourished on the strength of His life. "I do not frustrate the grace of God," says Paul, immediately after he has confessed: "The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me."

Michael Angelo was wont to say of the chip-pings that fell from his chisel, "While the marble wastes, the image grows;" and so in the processes of divine grace, the more we curtail the self-like

the more we increase the Christ-like. This, indeed, is the divine purpose concerning us—"To raise the human to the holy, to wake the spirit from the clay." God takes a thousand times more pains with man, than the sculptor with his marble, to bring him into the form which is the highest and noblest in His sight—the image of His Son; but man must yield to the hand that chisels. The "marble" of this lower life must waste if the "image" is to grow.

"By the grace of God I am what I am," said Samuel Rutherford, who braved persecution and feared not death, because he could lean on the strength of his sovereign Redeemer. "How dark it is," he writes, "when He, the sun of my day, hides Himself from me; how weak I am in my resolves, when seven times a day I need to seek Him; and how short I would shoot of the covenant prize if the grace He has promised were not supplied. My faith hath no bed to rest upon but omnipotency!"

"When all around my soul gives way,
He then is all my hope and stay."

Third. There is need that we place absolute dependence in the offered grace in order to a right performance of every duty in the Christian life.

"His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain," said Saul, "but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me;" and so with the base of his operations in the grace of God, he could stand within the portals of the temple of Diana at Ephesus, or beneath the shadow of Cæsar's throne, and fearlessly preach redemption through Christ his Master. He could look to the open field of conflict at three score and ten, gird his sword upon his thigh, think of the cross and determinedly say, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Each Christian duty is on its way to the crown of glory when it throbs with the energy of a Saviour's love, and each act of Christian worship is a real sacrament when performed in His name; but what is all this work and all this worship other than the purposeless wheels of soulless machinery, unless we have said before we started, "To me to live is Christ"—is Christ-likeness, is Christ-glory-fying, is Christ-communion. So in the acts we are called to perform among men and for them, in our respective spheres of duty as they touch the world, our truest successes are always achieved when we lean on God. "Picton, go take yon fort," said the Duke of Wellington to his favorite general in one of the battles of the

Peninsular war, when the British forces were subjected to a galling fire from a neighboring fortification. "I cannot," said Picton, "the thing is impossible." "Go take that fort, Picton," said the resolute Duke. Picton no longer demurred, but approaching the General, said, "Give me a grasp of your conquering right hand, and I will take that fort." The warriors clasped hands for a moment, the needed inspiration was imparted, and before sunset the "Union Jack" was floating victoriously over the enemy's stronghold. The lesson is plain—my hand in the right hand of Him who conquered on Calvary, and all things are possible.

"By the grace of God I am what I am," said William Wilberforce, as he walked one day to the British House of Commons, repeating the words of the 91st Psalm, "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty," and resolving, in the might of consecrated action, to strike the fetters of civilized barbarity from the oppressed lives of nearly one million British slaves. His noble efforts were crowned with the success they deserved.

"By the grace of God I am what I am," said the Christ-like James Harvey, when with failing body, but indomitable spirit, he sought to ad-

vance the Master's cause. "Had I," he says, "all the faith of the patriarchs, all the zeal of the prophets, all the constancy of the martyrs, all the flaming devotion of a seraph, I would disclaim them all in point of dependence, and rely entirely on the grace of God."

"By grace we stand, by grace we persevere ;
Ourselves, our deeds, our holiest, highest deeds,
Unworthy aught ; grace, worthy endless praise.
If we fly swift, obedient to His will,
He gives the wings to fly.
If we resist temptation, and ne'er fall,
It is His shield omnipotent that wards it off ;
If we with love unquenchable before Him burn,
'Tis He that lights, and keeps alive the flame."

So wrote Robert Pollock, and when we each have done our best—our best for God and our best for man—we borrow the pen of the inspired apostle and write over character redeemed, over actions performed, over devotions accepted, over heaven won, "By the grace of God I am what I am."

Fourth.—Abounding grace ! it reaches the life at its every point, in its every weakness, for its every necessity ; and life's work done, "By the grace of God," we fear none evil and conquer death.

"What am I doing," said Dr. McLaren, of

Talbooth Church, Edinburgh, when on his death-bed he replied to the interrogation of a friend, "I will tell you what I am doing, I am gathering up all my prayers and my sermons, my good deeds and my ill deeds; I am going to fling them all overboard and swim to glory on the plank of free grace."

"Speak not to me of my honorable position," said the Duke of Kent—father of Queen Victoria—in the hour of death, to some one who sought to administer a false comfort. "If I am to be saved at all, it is not as a prince, but as a sinner. I rest alone on the grace of God."

And one and all of those who have run before us the Christian race, who have endured through dark days and bright days as "seeing Him who is invisible," have already cast their crowns in one glittering heap at the feet of "Him that sitteth upon the throne;" and this is the song that rolls on and up beneath the crystal dome of the New Jerusalem: "Unto Him that hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever."

Christian men and women, home-bound pilgrims of the night, is not this text the willing expression of your every heart? As you think

of the hour when you first "fled for refuge to the hope set before you," as you think of the love that has sustained you through many a season of sorrow and trial, as you recall the sweet memory of hallowed communion—the oasis-spots in the desert of life—where you have met with Jesus. as you gird up the loins of your spiritual strength, to make fresh start for the rest that remaineth, are you not constrained to speak as you go, "By the grace of God I am what I am?"

Here, then, let us resolve that in the constant reception of needed grace we shall give evidence of our appreciation of it by a deepening consecration to the service of Him, "whose we are." "Ye are not your own," says the Word, but, "bought with a price;" and as blood-bought creatures it is yours and mine to "glorify God" in our bodies and spirits which are His.

When Dr. Doddridge succeeded in obtaining a reprieve for a man condemned to death, and presented it to him with the signature of the Sovereign attached, bathed in tears of gratitude, the pardoned man fell down at his feet and cried out: "Oh, Mr. Doddridge, I am all yours, every drop of blood in my veins thanks you, for you had mercy on every drop of it."

"Oh to grace how great a debtor,
Daily I'm constrained to be."

It is all very well to sing these lines, but it is far better to live them—to show by our "walk and conversation" among men that we mean what we say when, at the foot of the cross where Jesus died to purchase our pardon from death eternal, we make the confession: "I am all yours."

"Having then gifts differing according to the grace given unto us," as the Apostle writes to the Romans, let us use our gifts; let us evince our gratitude by living action; let us reflect in our lives some grandeur of His character, who is the "Sun of Righteousness" and Sun of the soul. Let the "lights of the world" shine for the world. Let the salt of redeemed life give proof of its savor. It is our duty, it is our privilege! God expects it; and the degree of our glory for all eternity is conditioned upon the attainments in grace which we reach to-day. "To him that hath shall be given."

And, undecided soul, outside the ark, exposed to the storms that are coming up, without a sufficient shelter, without a sustaining hope, what meaning has my text for you to-night? Little as you may think it, it may have applica-

tion to your very condition, it has meaning for you. "By the grace of God," you are what you are—an object of mercy still, a sinner spared by long-suffering grace, a lost one whom Jesus is waiting to save, and, it may be too, a lost one who realizes just now, that pardon is free, that the door is wide open, that the curious Zaccheus may come down and denounce his worldliness, and selfishness, and sin, and be saved, that groping Bartimæus may look up from his blindness and look and live! But beware lest ye receive the grace of God in vain. The Word of Life is in your dwellings and in your lands; the lamp of salvation shines on your way. There will be no new prophet sent into the world; there will be no new miracle to dispel your doubts; and, do not forget this, there will be no second Christ to atone for the guilt of rejecting the first.

"Be wise to-day, 'tis madness to defer."

"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all," to sanctify and save. AMEN.



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